

**HYDRILLA:  
Be on Alert  
to Stop This Invasive Species**

by New York Sea Grant  
Launch Steward Shelby Persons

*Hydrilla verticillata* is an aggressive aquatic weed that creates thick mats that quickly cover an area and can clog recreational waterways. Hydrilla stems can grow up to 30 feet in length, with 2-8 small toothed leaves in a whorl (spiral).

*A dense mat  
of Hydrilla.  
Photo: Chris Evans,  
River to River DWMA,  
Bugwood.org*



This aquatic invasive species (AIS) is found in most of the southeastern United States. Hydrilla is a huge threat to New York State waterways and has already been discovered in southern areas of the state.

Hydrilla is believed to have been introduced to North America as an aquarium plant. It is likely that it was released into the wild by people dumping their aquarium plants or draining water gardens into the local rivers and lakes.

Some control efforts using an herbicide have been successful, but costly, to keep Hydrilla populations contained. Hydrilla was discovered in Cayuga Lake Inlet near Ithaca, NY, in August of 2011. According to the Hydrilla Task Force of the Cayuga Lake Watershed, "It cost about \$91,000 (plus staff and volunteer time) to contain hydrilla this first year, and substantial investments will be needed for follow-up for the next five years or more to prevent a widespread infestation. Left unchecked, the cost to eradicate hydrilla in the Inlet will rise dramatically. States with widespread hydrilla infestations spend up to \$30 million per year to contain hydrilla."

Systemic herbicide applications need to be continued long-term as Hydrilla tubers can lay dormant for 10 years. Treatment even two years after the tubers no longer appear is advised. Hydrilla is not considered under control until there have not been any sightings in an area for three years.

Collaborative prevention efforts are needed to keep Hydrilla from rooting in Lake Ontario and other New York State waters. See reverse for tips on how you can help.



## Tips for Slowing the Spread of Hydrilla

### How to Identify Hydrilla

- Stems grow up to 30 feet in length
- Leaves: 2-8 small pointed, toothed green leaves form in whorls around stem
- Small, floating white flowers
- Small, whitish/yellowish potato-like tubers attached to the roots

### How did Hydrilla Reach New York State?

- Hydrilla is believed to have been introduced to North America as an aquarium plant released into the wild by people dumping aquarium plants or draining water gardens into local rivers and lakes
- In 2008, isolated infestations were found in Suffolk County and in Creamery Pond in Orange County
- In August 2011, Hydrilla was discovered in Cayuga Lake Inlet in Ithaca, NY

### What are the Negative Impacts of Hydrilla?

- Threatens native plants by blocking the sunlight they need to thrive
- Decreases oxygen levels by inhibiting natural mixing action of the water; lower oxygen levels can lead to fish kills and reduce size and survival of sport fish
- Forms thick mats that obstruct boating, swimming, and near shore fishing, creating potential for reduced shoreline property values and negative impact on tourism
- Eliminates or reduces bird feeding and fish spawning and nursery habitat

### Why is Hydrilla so Troublesome?

- Hydrilla is easily spread because it can colonize from a single plant fragment
- Tubers can lay dormant up to 10 years, making long-term containment measures necessary (control is measured by 3 years without any sightings of tubers)
- Hydrilla control measures can be costly

### What You Can Do to Help

- **Do not dump** aquariums or their contents into river, canals, and lakes
- **"Inspect & Clean, Drain & Dry"** boats, trailers, equipment and any gear that contacted the water before leaving an area; for more tips see the New York Sea Grant Watercraft Inspection How-To video at [www.nyseagrant.org/ccd](http://www.nyseagrant.org/ccd)
- **Properly dispose of AIS** plants, use AIS disposal containers when available
- **Spread the word!** Inform other boaters and anglers of the dangers of transporting aquatic hitchhikers
- **Report AIS findings** to authorities. Take GPS coordinates or document location, noting nearby onshore landmarks. Photograph and bag suspected AIS for confirmation by local Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) or New York State Department of Environmental Conservation office.

### For More Information:

- [www.nyseagrant.org/ais](http://www.nyseagrant.org/ais)
- [www.protectyourwaters.net](http://www.protectyourwaters.net)
- <http://nyis.info>



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New York Sea Grant  
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315-312-3042  
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