HYDRILLA

Hydrilla verticillata

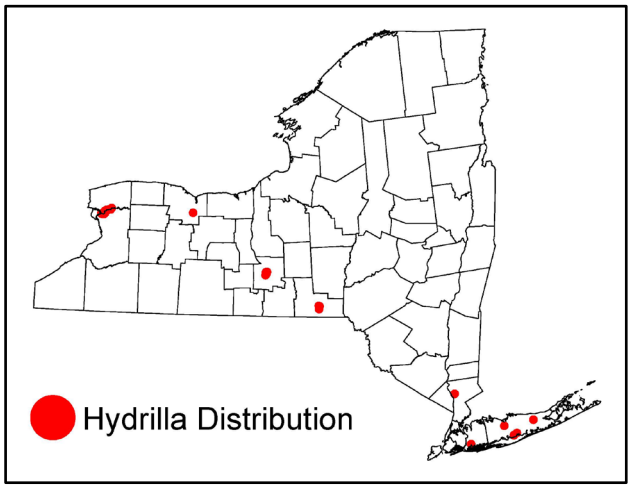
NEW YORK STATE | Department of Environmental Conservation

What is hydrilla?

Hydrilla or “water thyme” (*Hydrilla verticillata*) is an aquatic weed from Asia that is one of the most difficult aquatic invasive plants to control and eradicate in the United States. Infestations can have negative impacts on recreation and tourism, as well as severe consequences for aquatic ecosystems.

Where is hydrilla located?

Hydrilla was first discovered in 2008 in a small pond in Orange County and has since been discovered in Broome, Erie, Kings, Monroe, Nassau, Niagara, Suffolk, Tompkins, and Westchester counties.



What does it do to rivers, lakes, and wetlands?

Hydrilla can grow up to an inch a day, producing dense mats of vegetation that initially grow along the bottom of lakes and rivers. As they grow up to the water’s surface, these mats can become several feet thick. The mats shade out and displace native plants that provide food and shelter to native wildlife. They interfere with waterfowl feeding areas and fish spawning sites. Hydrilla disrupts water flow in reservoirs, hampers drainage in irrigation canals, and decreases dissolved oxygen in the water, which results in fish kills. The size and weight of sport fish are also reduced in areas infested with hydrilla.

How can it impact me?

Hydrilla’s dense mats of vegetation can interfere with boating, swimming, and fishing. Municipalities that rely on tourist dollars from recreational use of lakes and ponds can suffer serious losses in income due to an infestation. Waterfront property values can be greatly reduced, and property owners may incur some of the costs of management, which is expensive and long-term.

How does hydrilla spread?

In addition to producing seed, hydrilla has green overwintering buds called turions and tubers that grow at the end of the roots and store energy. New populations of hydrilla can sprout from any of these, as well as from plant fragments that easily break off from the main plant. Turions, tubers, and plant fragments can be carried by currents or boats, boat trailers, and fishing gear to new locations.

Dense mat of hydrilla in Croton River
Photo: C. McGlynn, NYSDEC

What are the tools for management?

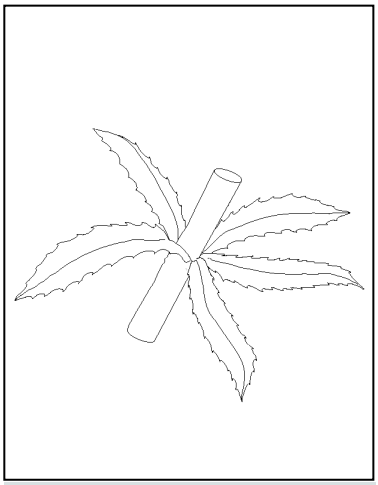
Several options for control and management are currently available and are used on a case-by-case basis. These options include: sterile grass carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*), benthic mats, hand pulling, and herbicide. Which management options are chosen depends upon factors including the size of the infestation, whether or not the waterbody is connected to other waterbodies, and the pattern of water movement in the waterbody. Several of these options have been used to aggressively manage infestations in the Cayuga Inlet and Erie Canal.

Photo: Robert Vidéki , Doronicum Kft., Bugwood

What can I do?

- Inspect and remove plant fragments and mud from boats, trailers, and equipment before and after each use.
- Dispose of all debris in trash cans or above the waterline on dry land. Note: tubers and turions can easily be transported in sediment.
- Clean and dry your equipment thoroughly before visiting other waterbodies.
- Do not dispose of unwanted aquarium plants in waterbodies, ditches, or canals.
- Monitor recently acquired aquatic plants because hydrilla tubers can be transported in the attached soil/growing material.
- Learn how to identify hydrilla and report infestations to DEC at isinfo@dec.ny.gov.

More information about hydrilla can be found here:
westchester.cce.cornell.edu/horticulture-environment/invasive-species



Whorl of leaves with serrated edges.
Illustration from Center for Aquatic Invasive Plants, University of Florida, IFAS

CONTACT INFORMATION

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