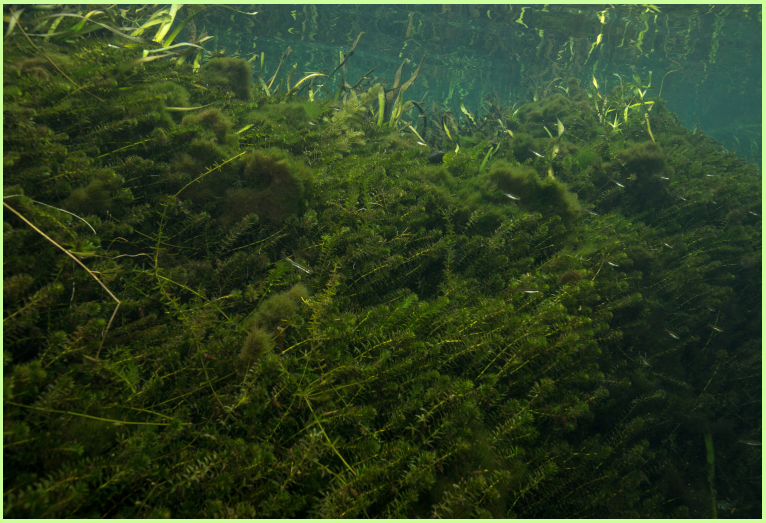
HYDRILLA

Hydrilla verticillata is a rooted, submersed aquatic plant that is native to the Indian Continent. Introduced in the U.S. through the aquarium trade in the 1950s, it has spread to 32 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. It was first documented in Delaware's state-owned public ponds in the 1970s and quickly spread and established in other water bodies throughout the state. Hydrilla is designated as a federal noxious weed, which prohibits interstate transport and importing it into the U.S. without a permit. It is included in the Delaware Invasive Species Council list of invasive species.

The small (<1" long) green leaves are pointed with serrated (toothed) margins. The leaves grow in whorls around the stem - 5 leaves per whorl is the most common. Rooted in the substrate, the stems can grow over 25ft in length and branch horizontally at the surface creating a dense mat. The flowers have 3 translucent petals that may have a few red streaks. It can reproduce by fragmentation, turions (stem tubers) and tubers. The white to yellowish tubers are small (<0.5") and occur at the end of stems that grow into the sediment.

Hydrilla thrives in the calm waters of freshwater ponds and lakes as well as tidal rivers and streams. It grows fast, quickly outcompeting native plants by spreading into shallower areas and blocking sunlight. Hydrilla can impact water quality by depleting oxygen levels and disrupting water flow. Although aquatic plants are an important component of the aquatic food web, dense stands of hydrilla can make foraging and spawning difficult for important game fish species. It can become so dense that it restricts boating, fishing and water-based recreation. It is especially important that boaters and anglers clean their boats and equipment to prevent Hydrilla from 'hitch hiking' and spreading to other water bodies.



QUICK FACTS

- Grows nearly 1" a day!
- Considered world's worst aquatic invasive plant
- A new plant can grow from a tiny stem fragment
- Tubers can survive freezing, desiccation, and the digestive tracts of wildlife
- Some states spend millions of dollars annually on hydrilla management

DELAWARE INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL