

Hydrilla

Hydrilla verticillata

Currently in Montana, noxious weed infest about 7.6 million acres (Montana's Noxious Weeds, MSU pub. 2010, pg. 6). Many of these state listed noxious weeds were brought to America as ornamentals for gardens, medicinal purposes, by accident in discarded soil from a ship's ballast or unintentionally in bags of seed brought from other parts of the world. Whatever the cause of introduction, 32 non-native plant species have found their way onto Montana's state noxious weed list.

Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*) is a Priority 3 regulated plant in the state of Montana. Priority 3 species are *not* state listed noxious weeds, they are considered regulated plants. These regulated plants have the potential to have significant negative impacts. The plant may not be intentionally spread or sold other than as a contaminant in agricultural products. The state recommends research, education and prevention to minimize the spread of the regulated plant. Species listed as Priority 3 regulated plants are: cheatgrass, hydrilla, and Russian olive.

Hydrilla can tolerate many different types of habitat types but does not thrive in fast moving waters. This plant is unique in the fact that it can grow in water that is a few inches deep or at depths of up to 20'. This plant is very hardy and can tolerate harsh climates and can easily survive harsh Montana winters with very cold temperatures. One notable characteristic of this plant that helps it establish over native species is that it can thrive in extremely shady conditions, giving it an advantage over other native species.

There are two types of hydrilla plants. One is monoecious, meaning that both male and female flowers are produced on the same plant for reproductive purposes, and is thought to have come from Korea. The second type that is thought to occur in Montana is dioecious, meaning that male and female flowers are produced on different plants and is thought to have come from India.

The stems of these plants are very thin and can grow to lengths of up to 30' in length. The leaves of this plant are small, only 5/8" long. Leaves have saw-toothed margins with pointed tips, and are present on the plant in whorls of 4-8. The leaves are usually green in color and are translucent. The female and male flowers of this plant have different appearances; the female flowers float on the water's surface from a thin threadlike stalk. Female flowers have six petals, are very small, and singular. The male flowers are very small and green, are submerged, break free and float to the surface for pollination. Upon pollination, tiny seeds about 1/16" in length are produced. Other ways of reproduction include stem fragments, rhizomes, tubers and turions.

Hydrilla is an aquatic invasive plant and is very difficult to control because it can reproduce through four different methods. Hydrilla has not been found in Montana; however it is a Priority 3 regulated species and not a state listed noxious weed. The reason hydrilla appears as a priority 3 regulated species is because it has been found in several states that border Montana.

Since hydrilla is an aquatic noxious weed the best forms of management include hand pulling or dredging and the use of water safe chemicals. If you believe you've found an infestation of hydrilla, contact your local county weed professional right away so that an integrated weed management plan can be established and treatment can begin to help eliminate further spread.

Please take a few moments to learn about noxious weeds, if noxious weeds are not currently a problem in your area, they may be in the near future. For more information about Montana's state listed noxious weeds, regulated plants, or weed species listed on your county weed list, please contact your local county weed district (can list weed district name here... ex: Lewis & Clark County Weed District) at (406) (Phone number). Or you can contact the Montana Department of Agriculture at (406) 444-3144.