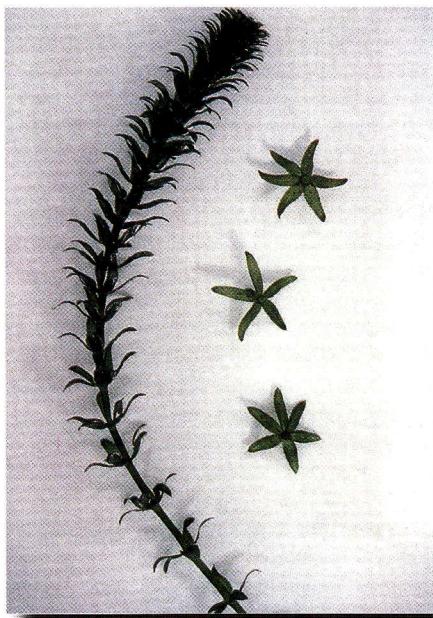


Hydrilla confirmed in a lake close to Michigan



The invasive plant *Hydrilla verticillata* has been confirmed in a lake less than an hour's drive from Michigan.

As a result, Michigan Sea Grant is encouraging waterfront property owners, as well as boaters, anglers and swimmers, to search the state's inland lakes to make sure it hasn't infested bodies of water in Michigan.

Sea Grant is also asking recreational users to take precautions against transporting hydrilla and other aquatic invasive species on their gear.

Biologists from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently confirmed the presence of the so-called "perfect weed" in Lake Manitou near Rochester, Indiana, 55 miles south of the Michigan border near U.S. 131, a major highway to the state.

Carol Swinehart, aquatic invasive species communication specialist for Michigan Sea Grant Extension, says it's critical to find out whether any Michigan inland lakes are infested. "The sooner we learn whether Michigan waters are infested, the better chance we have of eradicating or controlling it. Many of our lakes are already infested with invasive Eurasian water milfoil, and experts tell us that Hydrilla is even worse."

Hydrilla has many adaptive qualities that allow it to out-compete and greatly diminish populations of native species: It can grow in low-light areas; it absorbs carbon from the water more efficiently than other plants; it is very tolerant to both standing and flowing water; and can also grow up to an inch per day. And its reproductive abilities make it particularly threatening. The tubers that grow from the roots can persist, in a viable state, in the lake bottom for several years. It can also reproduce through flowers, fragments, and turions (cone-shaped growths) on its stalks.

Michigan Sea Grant Extension has spearheaded a Michigan "Hydrilla Hunt" since 2004 in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Office of the Great Lakes, and offers background information and a specimen identification card through its web site. Citizens can also obtain Hydrilla identification cards and a fact sheet from Michigan Sea Grant Extension offices at Michigan State University and in Grand Haven, Traverse City, Tawas City, Mt. Clemens, Detroit and Marquette, as well as from MSU Extension offices in Barry,

Benzie, Branch, Calhoun, Charlevoix, Clinton, Emmet, Genesee, Grand Traverse, Livingston, Macomb, Montcalm, Muskegon, Kent, Van Buren, Kalamazoo and Ottawa counties, as well as the Kellogg Biological Station in Hickory Corners.

"If someone thinks they've found hydrilla, we ask that they compare the plant with the image on our web site or the Hydrilla Hunt card, which provide illustrations to help distinguish it from the native aquatic plant elodea. If it has all the characteristics described there, send us a sample so that we can make sure," Swinehart says. It is illegal to possess hydrilla in Michigan (except to send it for identification) or to take the plant across state lines. Michigan residents and visitors can help prevent the spread of hydrilla by properly cleaning watercraft or other water recreation gear.

More information on invasive species prevention practices is available at www.protectyourwaters.net. Michigan Sea Grant is a collaborative program of Michigan State University and the University of Michigan, conducting Great Lakes research, education and outreach. For more information, visit www.miseagrant.umich.edu.

HOW TO HUNT FOR HYDRILLA:

- Conduct the search early in the morning on a calm, sunny day. Start with the public boating access, if available.
- Look for plant material washed up on the shore, and use a rake or other collection device to capture a specimen.
- Go slowly around the shoreline wearing polarized sunglasses to reduce glare.
- Look in water up to 20 feet deep. Pay special attention to any unusual plant growth.
- Check the lake's outlet and any flow-restricting structures, such as dams and spillways.
- Check for plants near stream inlets and in shallow bays.

SPECIMEN COLLECTION STEPS:

- STEP 1. Collect 5 or 6 inches of the plant.
- STEP 2. Compare your plant's features with these drawings to rule out the most often confused native plant, Elodea.
- STEP 3. Complete the I.D. card.
- STEP 4. Shake the water off your specimen. Use 2 tablespoons of rubbing alcohol to moisten a paper towel. Place both in a sealable plastic bag.
- STEP 5. Mail the I.D. card and sealed sample bag to the following address: Hydrilla Hunt, Michigan Sea Grant, Michigan State University, 334 Natural Resources, East Lansing, MI 48824.

PREVENTION STEPS:

- Inspect and remove any visible mud, plants, fish or animals before transporting your recreational equipment.
- Drain water from equipment (boat, motor, trailer, live wells) before transporting it.
- Dry equipment for at least five days.
- Dispose of unwanted live bait in the trash.
- KNOW THE LAW: Michigan laws prohibit possessing or transporting any live transgenic (genetically engineered) organisms, several live nonnative fish and many nonnative aquatic plants, including entire plants, fragments and seeds, except to have them identified by a qualified expert.