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# Great Lakes Hydrilla Risk Assessment

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## Project Background: What is Hydrilla and Why is it a Problem?

Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*) is a very aggressive aquatic invasive plant native to Korea. It is usually found rooted in shallow water (less than 25 feet deep) with long stems that can grow up to 30 feet in length and up to one inch per day. These stems branch at the water's surface and grow horizontally, forming thick, dense mats. Hydrilla also produces tubers, small potato-like structures, which store food for the plant and allow it to overwinter in bottom sediments and sprout in the spring.



Source: Leslie Mehrhoff, US Forest Service

There are two types of hydrilla found in the United States - monoecious and dioecious. Monoecious hydrilla is better adapted to survive at higher latitudes than dioecious, and has been documented in the Great Lakes Basin.

## What Does Hydrilla Look Like?

Key plant identification features:

- Pointed, bright green leaves about 5/8 inch long with small teeth on the edges.
- Leaves generally grow in whorls of 3 to 10 around the stem, though five leaves are most common.
- Floating white flowers and small white-to-yellowish tubers attached to the roots.

## Why is Hydrilla a Problem?

- It is one of the world's most invasive aquatic plants.
- It spreads rapidly through several different methods, primarily by transport of plant fragments by water currents and recreational boats and trailers.
- It produces tubers in sediment that remain viable for years, allowing the plant to overwinter and re-grow each spring, even when all aboveground parts of the plant are lost.
- It can grow up to one inch per day.
- It forms dense mats that block sunlight and displace native plants.

