



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 901 W. Smith Road Bellingham WA 98226
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BRAZILIAN ELODEA

Egeria densa

Threat: Brazilian elodea, native to South America, has been imported to North America, as well as many countries around the world, as an aquarium plant (often sold under the name of Anacharis). It has been intentionally or accidentally introduced to freshwater bodies in many of these areas. Brazilian elodea forms dense stands in both still and flowing waters, which can cover entire lake surfaces. These dense stands affect water movement, water quality, recreational uses and navigation, as well as trapping sediment and impacting native plants and fish. Brazilian elodea grows rapidly in the spring, shading out slower growing native plants. In the United States, this weed apparently spreads solely by plant fragmentation, as no female plants are known to be present in this country. It is illegal to sell this plant in the state of Washington. The first record of an escaped population of Brazilian elodea in Whatcom County was found in October of 2004.

Description: Brazilian elodea is a submersed, freshwater perennial. It roots in water up to 20 feet deep, with the stems growing up to the surface of the water, where they form dense mats. Adventitious roots grow from the stem nodes. The leaves and stem are generally bright green. The leaves are minutely serrated, 1-3 centimeters long and up to 5 millimeters wide. Brazilian elodea produces small white flowers, with three petals, in late spring and again in the fall. The flowers float on the water or rise above the surface on threadlike stems. In this country, only male flowers have been found so seed production is not known to occur here. This plant is often confused with other aquatic plants, both native and introduced. Brazilian elodea has four (sometimes eight) leaves per whorl (hydrilla, another introduced weed has five leaves per whorl, while the native American elodea, or waterweed, has three).



Photo courtesy of Thurston County Noxious Weed Agency

Control: Like all aquatic weeds, control is difficult and eradication may be unrealistic. To prevent the spread of any these plants, trailers, boats and fishing gear should be carefully inspected to avoid transporting plant materials between water bodies. Aquarium plants should never be discarded in sewer systems or water bodies. Accurate identification of Brazilian elodea is essential before control work can begin, as it resembles other aquatic plants, including some native species. Control efforts can include chemical and mechanical measures, although success is usually limited. Cutting the plants will open up the water body, but does not kill the plant. All plant pieces must be removed from the water as escaped plant fragments will spread the infestation. Bottom barriers can be used in small areas, such as docks or swimming areas, to prevent the growth of bottom-rooting plants. Where possible, water drawdowns may be used to control Brazilian elodea, although success is dependent on many variables (degree of desiccation, substrate, air temperature and presence of snow. Grass carp may be effective in appropriate sites. Contact the weed board for site-specific chemical recommendations.