



Whatcom Weeds

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

Cabomba caroliniana

Threat: Fanwort is an aquatic plant native to the eastern United States, which grows in still to slow moving water. It is sold as an aquarium plant and has been introduced to some water bodies in Oregon and Washington. It produces dense growth that can affect water movement, recreational uses and native aquatic life. Fanwort reproduces by seed, rhizomes and by plant fragments. In late summer, the stems become brittle, causing the plant to break into fragments, which can further spread the infestation. Fanwort is self-pollinating and the seeds germinate readily. It is now illegal to sell this plant in Washington State.

Description: Fanwort is a rooted submersed aquatic perennial, growing up to 6 or 7 feet long. It has finely divided fan-shaped leaves that are dark green or reddish. These leaves are attached in pairs, opposite each other, along the stem, on the submerged portion of the plant. Due to the arrangement of these leaves and the denseness, fanwort has a tubular appearance in the water. Sometimes, there are also small (less than ½ inch), oblong or arrowhead-shaped leaves that float on the water surface. Fanwort has small white flowers that float on the surface of the water.



Control: Like all aquatic weeds, control is difficult and eradication may be unrealistic. To prevent the spread of any of 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 fanwort 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 fanwort, although success depends on extreme drying on the exposed plants and substrate. Grass carp will eat fanwort and may be effective in appropriate