



Whatcom Weeds

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WATER CELERY

Vallisneria americana

THREAT: Water celery, also known as tapegrass, is an aquatic plant, native to eastern North America. It was originally introduced to Washington as a forage plant for wildlife. Water celery is eaten by waterfowl and does not seem to have invasive tendencies, so is not currently considered a detrimental species. However, since it is not native to Washington, it should not be intentionally transplanted to water bodies where it is not yet present. Water celery grows in freshwater and brackish systems.

DESCRIPTION: Water celery is a submersed, perennial, aquatic plant that grows in both still and moving water. The plant has long linear leaves, growing up to 9 feet long and one inch wide. Leaves end in blunt tips, which sometimes float on the top of the water. The leaves all emerge from the base of the plant and each leaf has a prominent light green midrib running down the center. Water celery has fibrous roots and produces horizontal, creeping rhizomes, from which new plants can grow. Small, white female flowers are produced on different plants than the tiny male flowers, and flowering occurs from July through September. After fertilization, the flower stalk coils into a corkscrew-like shape, the presence of which can aid in identifying this plant. Water celery produces small, dark seeds in a long cylindrical pod. This plant reproduces by seed, rhizome and tuber.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Control methods are not well known for this species. Like all aquatic weeds, control is difficult and eradication may be unrealistic. To prevent the spread of any aquatic plants, trailers, boats and fishing gear should be carefully inspected to avoid transporting plant materials between water bodies. Water celery can be manually or mechanically removed. Covering with opaque material or the use of herbicides may be effective.

