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BRAZILIAN WATERWEED MANAGEMENT TIPS

Brazilian waterweed is native to South America and was introduced into North America through the aquarium trade in the late 1800's. Brazilian waterweed is a submerged, rooted aquatic perennial. The thin stems frequently branch and can reach 15 – 20 feet long. The leaves occur in whorls of three to six around the stem. Leaves are narrow, oblong and attach directly to the stem. Flowers are bright white with three petals and yellow stamens. Reproduction is primarily by stem fragmentation, although Brazilian waterweed does produce seeds in its native range. Brazilian waterweed has male and female plants, but currently only male plants are known to be present in North America so seed production is not possible.

Brazilian waterweed can form tall, dense stands in the water column, thus preventing sunlight penetration, displacing other aquatic vegetation and impeding water flow and withdrawals for power generation and agricultural irrigation. Heavy growth commonly hinders swimming, boating, fishing and other recreational activities.

Brazilian waterweed prefers still to slow-moving warm waters, although it can survive in a wide range of water temperatures. Brazilian waterweed has not been reported in Montana but is listed as a Priority 3 Regulated Plant. It is unknown if Brazilian waterweed could establish in Montana due to cold winter temperatures, but it does occur in Idaho, Washington and Oregon.



Brazilian waterweed is not known to be present in Montana at this time. If you think you have found this plant, collect a good-quality sample and contact your local Weed District immediately for positive identification.

Effective control measures for the management of Brazilian waterweed include:

- 1. Prevention:** Brazilian waterweed is not known to be present in Montana, therefore preventing the introduction and establishment of this plant is the highest priority. Early detection and rapid response efforts will be critical if Brazilian waterweed is detected in Montana.
- 2. Mechanical (hand pulling):** Hand pulling and diver operated suction are options for small infestations, but will have to be repeated as the plants grow back. Bottom barriers have also been used around docks and boat ramps to kill or reduce Brazilian waterweed. As sediment accumulates to about 1.5 inches on the barriers, they will have to be cleaned to prevent fragments from taking root.
- 3. Herbicide: Always follow directions on the label. The label is the law! In Montana, a 308 permit from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality is required to intentionally apply aquatic herbicides to water.** Herbicides can be used in some circumstances to control Brazilian waterweed, but applying herbicides to surface water safely and effectively requires specialized knowledge and training. Aquatic herbicides usually require two or more hours of contact time with the plant and therefore are ineffective in flowing water.