

Brazilian Waterweed

Egeria densa

Order: Hydrocharitales

Family: Hydrocharitaceae

Description: The slender stems of *Egeria* are usually a foot or two long, but can be much longer. The small leaves are strap-shaped, about one inch long and 1/4 inch wide. The leaf margins have very fine saw teeth that require a magnifying lens to see. Leaves occur in whorls of three to six around the stem. The flowers are on short stalks about one inch above the water. Flowers have three white petals and are about 3/4 inch across.

Special Features:

- **Flowers** - Flowers are produced in late spring and again in the fall. The intensity of flowering varies from year to year.
- **Invasive Properties** – Brazilian waterweed forms dense stands that restrict water movement, trap sediment, and cause fluctuations in water quality. Dense beds interfere with the recreational uses of a waterbody by interfering with navigation, fishing, swimming and water skiing.
- **Propagation** – All it takes is a few pieces or cuttings: aquarium dumping serves as an additional means of introduction for this invasive.
- **Ideal Situation** - In drought years, Brazilian waterweed appears to grow more quickly, while in years with heavy precipitation it appears to grow more slowly.

Similar Species: Brazilian waterweed may be confused with hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*). Similar in appearance and growth, Brazilian waterweed is easily recognizable by whorled leaves exceeding 2 cm and by fresh plants being smooth to the touch.

Range and Habitat: Brazilian waterweed is a submerged, freshwater perennial herb, generally rooted on the bottom in depths up to 20 feet or drifting.

It is found in both still and flowing waters, in lakes, ponds, pools, ditches, and quiet streams. It tends to form dense stands that can cover hundreds of acres and can persist until it dies back in the fall.

Reproduction: Once introduced, Brazilian waterweed reproduces through the spread of plant fragments. Because all the Brazilian waterweed plants in the United States are male, no seeds are produced. Branches sprout from "double nodes" located at about eight inch intervals along the stems. If a Brazilian waterweed fragment does not have a "double node", it can not grow into a new plant.

Notes:

- **Invaders!** - Found in streams, ponds and lakes, this submerged plant is native to South America but was imported to North America for the aquarium trade.
- **History** - The earliest report of Brazilian waterweed in the United States was from Millneck, Long Island where the plant was collected in 1893. It was offered for sale in the United States in 1915, where it was recommended as a good "oxygenator" plant.
- **Male or Female?** - Seeds and/or female flowers have never been reported from Brazilian waterweed populations established in the United States.
- **Growth** - The plants initiate growth when water temperatures reach 10 degrees centigrade (50°F). Two major growth flushes occur in spring and fall. Each of these flushes is followed by periods of die off/biomass loss.
- **Nicknames** – Brazilian waterweed is also commonly called Brazilian elodea.