

Hydrilla Seen As Florida's New No. 1 Pest

In the next ten years hydrilla will replace water hyacinths as Florida's number one water weed problem, a U.S. Department of Agriculture botanist predicts.

Robert D. Blackburn, the botanist who heads research on aquatic vegetation at the University of Florida's agricultural experiment station at Fort Lauderdale, Plantation Field Laboratory, sees hydrilla as the greatest potential threat to Florida's waterways.

Hydrilla is a submersed water plant that grows rooted to the bottom and has long, branching stems.

Even if above-soil portions of the plant are completely removed by mechanical or herbicidal methods, the area will be rapidly reinfested from small propagules and rootstock nodes. Hydrilla plants produce stem tubers that are a means of propagation. Also, broken shoots will develop into new plants.

"Hydrilla was introduced in Florida in 1960, in a small canal in Miami and in an area near Crystal River," Blackburn said. "Now 70,000 acres of Florida waterways are covered with hydrilla."

Blackburn explained that hydrilla was first brought to Florida by aquarium dealers. "Northern dealers would plant exotic plants in Florida springs and streams to harvest later and sell in the aquarium trade," Blackburn said.

The last Legislature passed a law to restrict importation of exotic aquatic plants and prohibit their planting in state waters. However, though there is a penalty of a \$1,000 fine for violating the law, there are no special means for enforcing it.

Hydrilla is found in canals, ditches, pools, lakes, marshes, slow-flowing streams, rivers and tidal water areas. It will grow in water six to seven meters deep and can produce very dense mats of vegetation.

"Hydrilla already has become a real problem in Florida," Blackburn said. "Some of the Winter Park-Orlando area recreational lakes have been closed because of it."

Hydrilla stops water flow in canals and streams, impedes boating, fishing and swimming, interferes

with fish production, and may create a health problem.

Blackburn said that in Orlando area lake drownings have occurred when people have fallen from boats into the water and were trapped under the thick mat of hydrilla. "Hydrilla grows so thick in some areas," Blackburn said, "that birds and small animals can walk over the top of it."

Research in Orlando associated encephalitis with the plant, though this has not been extensively confirmed. It is known that leaf spines on hydrilla cause rash on contact and that the rash can become infected.

Tote Herbicide Announced By C. B. Dolge Company

C. B. Dolge Company, Westport, Conn., has announced a new system-type of herbicide called Tote.

The weed killer acts on all perennial, biennial and annual growths, and also sterilizes the soil, doing the job for one entire season and well into the next, say company technicians.

Working through the roots, Tote has an exceptionally high LD₅₀ rating, the standard of toxicology measurement, that is well above other total-kill weed products now on the market, a company release stated. Besides its formulated active ingredients, Tote also contains an extender that has herbicidal effect for extra over-all total growth kill power.

One gallon of Tote in 15 gallons of water will treat 1,000 sq. ft. Even on dry ground, it is not wasted even if there is initial failure to penetrate to the roots, said the release, because a subsequent rain will put it to work.

Experience proves Tote gives at least 50% savings in labor, the release continued, and requires only 60 gallons of water per acre, compared with the 1,460 gallons required when applying sodium arsenite products. For details, circle (718) on the reply card.

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