

Osceola County's **SOLUTIONS** *for your LIFE*

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Hydrilla In Florida: How Did It Get Here?

By Stacia A. Hetrick

Florida's warm climate is a haven for many exotic plants and animals, brought here from around the world. Many of these species don't cause problems but some of them have become real pests! One of the worst of these pests is the invasive weed: hydrilla.

Hydrilla is an aquatic plant that is abundant in Osceola County. It spreads rapidly and can cover the surface of our ponds and lakes, clogging the waterway and causing environmental and economic damage. Flood control, water quality, fisheries, and recreation can all be impacted when hydrilla infests our waters.

How did it get here? Hydrilla was brought to the Tampa and Miami areas in the 1950s as an aquarium plant. It was intentionally released into a canal in Tampa where it spread rapidly. In Miami, it may or may not have been intentionally released, but by 1959 it was well established in a creek near an aquarium plant farm.

From these initial releases plus other potential unknown releases, hydrilla has spread throughout Florida and into much of the U.S. Boat propellers

and fishing equipment can easily transport the weed from one lake to another. All it takes is a small fragment of the plant to create a new infestation.



Aquarium owners introduce hydrilla and other aquatic weeds into new areas when they dump out their unwanted aquarium plants into ditches, ponds, or other bodies of water. Even so, hydrilla continues to be sold by aquarium supply dealers and over the Internet, even though moving this plant is prohibited in the U.S.

For more information on hydrilla and other invasive weeds and what you can do to help stop their spread, please visit our website: <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/osceola>.

Growing Orchids for the Beginner

By Jennifer Welshans-Pelham

People may be wary of orchids because of perceptions that they are difficult to grow and require a lot of effort for only one bloom per year. This is not always the case. Many species and hybrids of orchids grow well in Florida and flower profusely with minimum care. Orchids come in a wide variety of colors, sizes, and styles.