

Osceola County's SOLUTIONS for your LIFE

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1921 Kissimmee Valley Lane
Kissimmee, FL 34744
321-697-3000
<http://osceola.ifas.ufl.edu>

Mary Beth Salisbury
County Extension Director
Family & Consumer Science
msal2@osceola.org

Randy Bateman
Agriculture
rbat2@osceola.org

Joy Borgman
Family & Consumer Science/4-H
jbor@osceola.org

Eleanor Foerste
Natural Resources
efoe@osceola.org

Karen Henry
4-H
khen@osceola.org

Laura Royer
Family & Consumer Science
lroy@osceola.org

Jessica Sullivan
Florida Yards & Neighborhoods
jsul@osceola.org

Jennifer Welshans-Pelham
Horticulture
jwel2@osceola.org

Stacia Hetrick
Aquatics
shet@osceola.org

Aquatic weeds being studied in Osceola County By Stacia Hetrick

Attention boaters and anyone else with an interest in Florida's waterways: How much do you know about HYDRILLA?

Hydrilla is one of the most troublesome aquatic weeds that infest our lakes in Florida. It has been causing problems since the 1950s, spreading rapidly across the state and clogging our waterways. In its native range of Asia, hydrilla is kept in check by natural conditions, however in Florida it is able to explode and overwhelm our waters. If left unmanaged, hydrilla is capable of creating damaging infestations which can choke out native plants, clog flood control structures (which can lead to flooding), and impede waterway navigation and recreational usage.



It is very difficult to control hydrilla. It spreads easily from fragments breaking off and producing new plants. Boats and fishing equipment can easily spread this weed from one lake to another. *Boaters can help prevent the spread of hydrilla by always removing plants from boating equipment before leaving the water body.*

Managing hydrilla has become a chal-

lenging task and aquatic plant managers have had to incorporate new management strategies. We are in need of additional tools to keep hydrilla under control. For these reasons, Osceola County is working with the University of Florida, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and SePRO Corporation on a four-year Demonstration Project to find new and alternative methods to control hydrilla and another aquatic weed, hygrophylla. They are currently evaluating new herbicides and searching for natural enemies for controlling the plants.

The University of Florida/IFAS Osceola County Extension Office plays a major role in the Demonstration Project and is responsible for managing the grant, collecting biological data and keeping stakeholders updated on the project results.

One of the main components of the Demonstration Project is education and outreach. We hope by raising awareness among lake users that they will begin to recognize these problematic weeds and help prevent their spread. We also hope that we can help residents understand the problems these weeds can cause and why they need to be managed. You can help by learning more about invasive aquatic plants and then telling your family, friends and neighbors. Visit our website at <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/osceola>.