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Hydrilla: new control methods on the way?

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Attention Sportsmen!

Whether you are a hydrilla fan or are tired of cleaning it off your boat and trailer, this story is for you!

The University of Florida (UF)/IFAS Entomology and Nematology Department has been awarded a grant designed to tackle one of the U.S.'s most troublesome invasive plants: Hydrilla. The name of the project is: Integrated Pest Management Risk Avoidance and Mitigation Project (Hydrilla IPM RAMP).



Gathering Hydrilla on Lake Toho

Hydrilla verticillata (a.k.a. hydrilla) is an invasive freshwater plant common in Florida. It was brought to the Tampa and Miami areas as an aquarium plant in the late 1950s. By the 1970s, it was established throughout Florida.

If left unmanaged, hydrilla is capable of creating damaging infestations which can choke out native plants, clog flood control structures, and impede waterway navigation and recreational boating, fishing and hunting activities. In addition, hydrilla is showing resistance to fluridone, a systemic herbicide used to manage it for the past 20 years.

According to the UF/IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants, millions of dollars are spent each year on herbicides and mechanical harvesters in Florida in an effort to place hydrilla

under "maintenance control." Because hydrilla can provide food and shelter for some wildlife species such as bass and certain ducks, *the goal of this program is to manage hydrilla, not eradicate the weed.*

Thanks to this new 4-year, \$500,000 USDA grant, UF/IFAS research and extension faculty, FAMU faculty and an ARMY Corps Engineer are tackling the hydrilla problem head-on.

This project is designed to study new chemical and biological control methods as part of an overall hydrilla integrated pest management (IPM) plan.

As part of this project, the partnership of researchers will be studying the impacts of the integrated use of a new herbicide, a naturalized hydrilla mining midge (a type of insect) and a native fungus that is a hydrilla pathogen.

All of these options will change how hydrilla grows and create more favorable boating, hunting and fishing areas on lakes that have become almost unusable because of the dense hydrilla growth.

A new website devoted to this project is currently under construction. In the meantime, please visit the following websites for more information on hydrilla:

The UF/IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants: <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu> and the Osceola County Hydrilla and Hygrophila Demonstration Project Website: <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/osceola>. or Jennifer Gillett-Kaufman, gillett@ufl.edu. or (352)273-3950



The hydrilla tip mining midge may be one of the answers to the control of hydrilla. These insects are extremely small, only about 1/10 of an inch.

The hydrilla tip mining midge bores into the stem of the hydrilla, lays its eggs inside. The larvae (shown below) eat the tissues of the plant and eventually disrupt shoot-growth.

