

Elodea

Elodea canadensis

Family

Hydrocharitaceae (frogbit)

Also known as

Canadian pondweed, oxygen weed

Where is it originally from?

Central and South America

What does it look like?

Submerged, bottom-rooting perennial (<8+ m). Brittle, branched, slender stems (1 mm diameter). Translucent, linear, dark green leaves (6-12 x 2 mm) are in whorls of three (opposite at base). Male (very rare) and female flowers are on separate plants. Produces white, 5-petalled flowers (5 mm diameter) tinged with purple that sit on the surface of the water on long thread-like stalks. No seed is set in New Zealand.

Are there any similar species?

Lagarosiphon, *Egeria*, *Hydrilla* are all similar.

Why is it weedy?

Grows in moderate to highly-lit submerged sites and tolerates a wide range of temperatures. Moderate growth rate, tall, long-lived, dense, and crowds out and overtops smaller native species. Brittle stems break and fragments root downstream or wherever they are dumped. Lacks native plant competitors of similar height, but unlike other oxygen weeds, often co-exists with native species.

How does it spread?

Loose stem fragments root at any node, colonising new sites. Water flow spreads it within catchments, and new catchments are infested by fragments spread by boats and trailers (occasionally motor cooling water), eel nets, diggers, and people liberating fish. Birds do not spread it.

What damage does it do?

Can form deep underwater 'meadows', shading out smaller native species and prevents seedlings of native species establishing. Large clumps dislodge from these 'meadows', causing flooding. Rotting vegetation stagnates water, killing fauna and flora. Tends to be replaced by *Lagarosiphon* or *Egeria* and other weeds if these are also introduced into the same waterbody.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Rivers, lakes, dune lakes, and other waterbodies with moderate to high light and temperatures under 28 degrees C.



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Photo: Tracey Edwards



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