



## TACKLING

# Parrot's Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*)

Invasive species have significant impacts on the environment, human health, infrastructure and the economy in the Metro Vancouver region.

Parrot's feather is an aquatic plant from South America. This plant rapidly spreads by fragments as small as 4 millimetres. Most infestations in Metro Vancouver are believed to have been caused by illegal dumping of garden ponds or aquariums.

## IMPACTS

Parrot's feather forms dense mats in ponds, streams, ditches and other waterbodies. It lowers the quality of habitat and food available for fish, amphibians, birds and other animals. It also causes flooding, changes the flow of water, and impacts recreation activities such as swimming, fishing and boating.

## IDENTIFICATION

Parrot's feather can be easily mistaken for other native and invasive plants. Identification should be confirmed by an expert.

- **Lifecycle:** Perennial aquatic plant that roots in the sediment below and grows up to 30 centimetres above the water's surface; during the winter most of the plant dies off except for the roots
- **Stem:** 2-5 metres long, with many branches
- **Leaves:** Feather-like, growing all around the stem; leaves under the water are reddish, and leaves above the water are bright green, waxy and look like little trees
- **Flowers:** Small and white (rarely seen)



Top part of stems found above the water

CREDIT: VILSESKOGEN VIA FLICKR



Stems found below the water

CREDIT: ISCMV



## PREVENTION AND CONTROL

To prevent further spread, it is best not to purchase, trade or grow parrot's feather for aquariums or garden ponds. If this plant is already present, it is critical to ensure it does not invade adjacent wetlands and other sensitive ecosystems. Effective invasive plant management typically involves a variety of control methods. The following table summarizes the recommended techniques for controlling parrot's feather on private property or where permission has been granted by the land owner or manager.

**Work in waterbodies may require permits from provincial or federal authorities and consultation with a qualified environmental professional.**

CONTROL STRATEGY	TECHNIQUES	SUITABLE SITES	NOTES
Manual	<b>Pull by hand, removing the entire plant including the roots</b>	Small sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Not possible at sites where the water is deep, and the entire plant cannot be reached</li></ul>
Mechanical	<b>Use an excavator to remove stems, roots and 15-25 centimetres of sediment from the bottom of the waterbody</b>	Large sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Expensive</li><li>Control in March, with follow-up in June/July</li></ul>

All control activities may create fragments, encouraging spread. It is critical to prevent the movement of fragments within the waterbody. Work in waterbodies may require special permits. Elimination of this plant will require many years of control.

## How Can You Help?

- Do not purchase, trade or grow parrot's feather for aquariums or garden ponds.
- Control invasive plants and replace them with a non-invasive alternative. Check out [growgreenguide.ca](http://growgreenguide.ca) for suggestions.
- Do not dump aquariums or water garden waste into rivers, streams, lakes or storm sewers. Visit your municipality's website for more information on disposing yard and water garden waste appropriately.
- Parrot's feather can be easily spread by boats, boat trailers and fishing gear. **Clean, drain and dry** all items to prevent the spread of aquatic invaders.
- Download the '[Report Invasives BC](#)' app to identify and report invasive species.

For the complete set of best management practices for parrot's feather, and other key invasive species, visit [MetroVancouver.org](http://MetroVancouver.org) and search 'Invasive Species'.



An excavator removing parrot's feather from a drainage ditch  
CREDIT: CITY OF RICHMOND