

*Exotic plant found growing in Manchester

An exotic weed from South America has been found living near South Willow Street in Manchester's Nutt's Pond.

The Brazilian elodea, or waterweed was found by a member of the Manchester Conservation Commission and then documented by biologists from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. The plant is used ornamentally in pet stores and aquariums, but spreads rapidly and competes with native vegetation.

The Nutt's Pond occurrence is the first time Brazilian elodea has

ever been found growing in the wild north of Virginia.

The danger, according to the conservation commission, is the plant's ability to spread by fragmentation. Only a small fragment of plant is needed to root a new stand. It appears similar to native species of waterweed, but is more robust and has white blossoms that grow above the water's surface.

Reportedly, the plant's seeds are not able to survive the winter in colder climates, but where regular inputs of heated urban runoff occur, like in Nutt's Pond,

survival may be possible.

As an exotic plant species gains ground, it disrupts the natural biodiversity of the ecosystem by competing with native species for resources such as light and nutrients. As biodiversity fails, the remaining length of the food chain is also altered, affecting all life in the pond.

The spread of Brazilian elodea in Nutt's Pond will be monitored this fall and next spring to determine if the plant survives the winter. If it does, steps will be taken to remove the plant from the pond.

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