

Nutt's Aquarium



Although aquatic vegetation is flourishing in Nutt's Pond near South Willow Street, it's not the right kind. An exotic, or non-native, weed called Brazilian elodea is spreading quickly throughout the pond.

Until now, the plant has not been documented north of Virginia. Brazilian elodea is not supposed to be able to survive the cold of New England



Brazilian elodea

winter, but Urban Ponds Restoration Coordinator Art Grindle says that the plant is "so widespread that we've had to face the reality that it's been there for more than one season." It may be that the heated urban runoff that flows into Nutt's Pond keeps the water warm enough for the elodea to overwinter.

The elodea is common as a decorative aquarium plant and Grindle suspects that someone may have emptied some aquarium water containing the plant into the pond or into a street drain which emptied into the pond. Domestic fish such as decorative carp have been found in Nutt's Pond in the past.

The classic danger of an exotic species such as Brazilian elodea is that it may outcompete the native vegetation and eventually replace three or four native species, diminishing the diversity of and thus weakening the ecosystem, not unlike the arrival of McDonald's or Wal-Mart into a community of small businesses.

If the weed does make it through the winter, efforts will be made to remove it from the pond, says Grindle. Some types of herbicide have been used successfully against Brazilian elodea in other parts of the country.—Dave Karlotski