

Parrot Feather, milfoil *Myriophyllum brasiliense* (or *aquaticum*)

Non-native to Chesapeake Bay; invasive

Family - Hydrocharitaceae

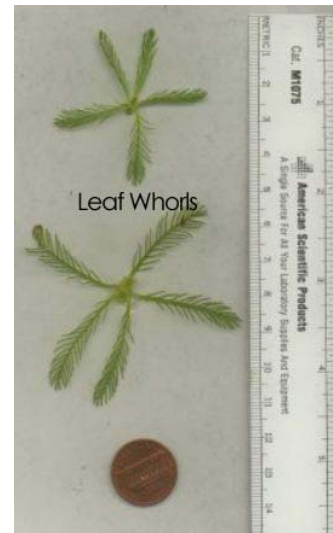
Distribution - Parrot feather is native to South America and was introduced to the Chesapeake Bay through escape from aquaria. It is found in non-tidal fresh waters, where it can quickly spread to cover available habitat. It has not been reported in tidal waters and its salinity tolerance is not known.

Recognition - Plants are reddish tinted and these plants, with very leafy foliage on stout stems, can emerge a few inches above water (emergent tips appear gray-green). Leaves occur in whorls of mostly 5, all alike, 2-5 cm (< 3/4 in to 2 in) long with 10-25 hair-like segments per side. Bracts are leaf-like, with filiform bracteoles (thread-like leaves) cleft into 2 or 3 divisions. Parrot feather bears fruits that are 2 to 3 mm (1/16 in) long, and finely granular.

Ecological Significance - Parrot feather, a member of the water-milfoil family (*Haloragaceae*), is a herbaceous aquatic perennial that gets its name from the feather-like appearance of its gray-green leaves. Male and female flowers are on different plants, but only the female plants have been found in North America.

Parrot feather is a native of the Amazon River and was introduced to North America in the Washington, D.C. area around 1890. However, since its introduction, the plant has spread throughout the southern United States and northward along both coasts. It appears to prefer warmer, milder climates and has spread quickly via plant fragments through waterways and drainage systems and intentional plantings. The federal government and several states list it as a noxious weed.

Similar Species - Parrot feather usually has whorls of 5 pinnate leaves, whereas Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) usually has whorls of 4 pinnate leaves and only its flowers stick above the water. Appearance is similar to coontail (*Ceratophyllum demersum*); coontail, however, has whorls of 9-10 leaves at stem nodes, lacks a root system and never pro-



Reproduction -Reproduction is both sexual (by seed) and asexual (by fragmentation). Parrot feather is dioecious with unisexual flowers, which form in the axils of submerged leaves.