



# Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 322 N. Commercial St Bellingham WA 98225  
(360) 778-6234 [www.whatcomcounty.us/914/Weeds](http://www.whatcomcounty.us/914/Weeds)

## JAPANESE EELGRASS

### *Zostera japonica*

**THREAT:** Japanese eelgrass, also called dwarf or narrow-bladed eelgrass, is a native of Asia, possibly introduced to this state in the 1930s in shipments of Japanese oyster spat. Reproduction is through seeds and creeping rhizomes, both of which can be dispersed by water movement. Seed is also probably eaten and spread by waterfowl, while rhizomes can be spread by hitch-hiking on boating gear. Japanese eelgrass has been found invading coastal mudflats, occurring higher in the intertidal zone than the native eelgrass (*Z. marina*). It has the potential to affect tidal flow, possibly altering the tidal ecosystem, and is seen as a threat to the shellfish industry of the state. Japanese eelgrass is recognized in Washington State as a **Class C** noxious weed on commercially managed shellfish beds only.

**DESCRIPTION:** Japanese eelgrass is a grass-like, aquatic, herbaceous plant. It grows as an annual or short-lived perennial. Leaf blades generally have 3 parallel veins, and are up to a foot in length and 1/8 inch in width. Plants have 2 elongated roots, and creeping rhizomes, which produce roots and shoots at the nodes. Japanese eelgrass is similar, but smaller than the native eelgrass (see photo below).

**MANAGEMENT OPTIONS:** Japanese eelgrass can be controlled through manual and chemical methods. Although very labor intensive, hand removal of Japanese eelgrass can be effective with small infestations. Contact the weed board for site-specific recommendations.



Native eelgrass on left; Japanese eelgrass on right.  
Photo courtesy of Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board