

# Aquatic Weed Fact Sheet

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## Brittle Naiad

### *Najas minor*

Brittle naiad (also called slender, spiny, or bushy naiad) is a highly invasive, submersed annual aquatic plant introduced into the United States from Europe. It has established from Ontario west to Illinois and southward to Florida. This plant has spread rapidly in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic states, where it grows either in mixed stands with other invasive exotic species (e.g., hydrilla) or as a monoculture, excluding native plants and producing conditions adverse to fish and waterfowl. It can form dense shoals and surface mats in water 12 ft. in depth, and is readily spread by boat traffic and water movements. Brittle naiad is widely distributed in North Carolina and has caused some serious problems in a few locations, including Lake Gaston, where it commonly replaces other more invasive exotics (e.g., hydrilla) following management operations.



The stems of brittle naiad are highly branched and may grow to a length of 4 ft. or more. The stems also fragment readily, hence the common name "brittle" naiad. Leaves are opposite, strap-shaped, about one inch in length, and have prominent marginal teeth. Near the growing tips of the stems the internodes are very short, giving a bushy appearance to the plant. Reproduction is by fragmentation and seed production. Flowers are very small and are produced singly in the leaf axils from early spring through late summer. Single-seeded fruits mature in summer through late fall. Seed germination occurs in early spring. The plants are annual and do not persist beyond late fall. Brittle naiad superficially resembles and often is confused

with another submersed vascular plant, coontail (*Ceratophyllum* spp.), and the macroalga, muskgrass (*Chara* sp.). It can be distinguished from coontail by its oppositely paired, unbranched, straplike, leaves (coontail leaves occur in whorls of 4 or 5 and are forked at the tips). It also can be distinguished readily from muskgrass by breaking the stems: if the stem remains turgid, it's brittle naiad.

For additional information visit our web site at:

<http://www.cropsci.ncsu.edu/aquaticweeds>

