

**Elodea: A Well-Adapted Plant**

Elodea is a dark green plant. It's found in ponds and slow-moving streams. Elodea has pointed leaves. And the leaves grow around the stem in tight whorls, or circles, of three or more. These leaves provide excellent shelter for baby fish. The stem itself is kind of brittle. Still, it can grow up to two feet long. Along this stem, new branches often grow.

You will find elodea interesting to observe in your aquarium. It is able to grow in two ways. It can float freely near the surface of the water. Or, it can take root at the bottom. You may notice free-floating plants sending down long pale roots.

What happens when elodea breaks apart into smaller segments? Each piece can grow into a new plant. And like its parent, each new plant can either float or take root.

**Easy to Grow**

Elodea is very hardy and easy to grow. It thrives in strong light. But it can survive for a fairly long time in low light, too. If there is not much light, the plant will become thin. It may lose some of its bright color. If you put it back in bright light, though, it will grow strong again.

All of these features are adaptive. They help the plant survive under poor conditions. But they can also make the plant a problem for people, animals, and other plants. Can you imagine why? Well, first because elodea grows so quickly it can clog waterways. It can also crowd out other plant life on both the water's top and bottom.

Your aquarium has only three types of producers. But real waterways, such as oceans, ponds, and streams, have a wide variety. Can you name some others?

