

Water Hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*)

Identification:

Roots are dark and feathery, only going into the soil during flowering periods. The petioles appear to have bulbous spongy sections on the stem, that look like and subsequently act as flotation devices for the plant. The plant free-floats on and extend above the water. The leaves are round, thick, waxy, and bright green in color. The leaves can be kidney shaped or slightly concaved. The stalks can reach 16 inches with 8-15 lavender colored flowers on it., which occurs in late summer and early fall. The flowers have 6 petals with a yellow oval shaped spot on the central lobe. Fruit is hardly seen but a 3 celled capsule holding many seeds can be found in a submerge withered flower.

Habitat and Spread:

Growing in a wide range aquatic habitats including lakes, ponds, rivers, wetlands, and marshes, this plant can prefer waters with high nutrient content but can prosper in difficult conditions. It can withstand water level fluctuations, low nutrients, acidity, and varying flow rates. Fragmentation and offshoots of branching stems are the primary mode of reproduction. It primarily reproduces vegetatively but may produce seeds in favorable conditions of high temperature and humidity. This is an aquatic invasive species that is lowering light availability throughout the water column and decreasing dissolved oxygen levels. These impacts are altering native vegetation and fish communities.

Management Techniques:

Avoiding new introductions into waterways is the best way to prevent further infestations. Hand removing all parts of the plants is a good practice for small infestations. It is very important not to break the plant when removing and to remove all parts of the plant, due to their vegetative reproduction. Herbicides can be used on small infestations. On larger infestations plant harvesting machines or complete drainage of waterway is necessary.



Katherine Parys, USDA-ARS, Bugwood.org



Shaun Winterton, Aquarium and Pond Plants of the World, Edition 3, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org

Native Range and Original Introduction:

Native to the Amazon River Basin in South America, it was introduced in the US in 1884 at the Cotton State Exposition in New Orleans, Louisiana and continued its invasion.