

Water hyacinth

Eichhornia crassipes

Notify Council

Water hyacinth is an Unwanted Organism and Notifiable Organism under the Biosecurity Act (1993): propagation, spread, display or sale are prohibited. All sightings must be reported to the Ministry for Primary Industries on 0800 80 99 66.

What is council doing about this?

Water hyacinth is 1 of 9 National Interest Pest Response (NIPR) species that the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) has identified for either eradication or national control. MPI works closely with the regional councils and Department of Conservation on these programmes.

What does it look like?

Water hyacinth is a free-floating aquatic plant that can grow in dense mats. The leaves are glossy, green, leathery and up to 8cm across. The leaf stems are swollen and spongy and act like floats. Each plant has a mass of purple roots. It produces an attractive spike of up to ten large, lilac-mauve flowers, each with a yellow spot in the centre of one of the petals.

Water hyacinth grows in still or slow moving freshwater, such as ponds, streams, swamps and dams. In New Zealand, water hyacinth has been most common on small, nutrient-enriched waterbodies.

Why is it a problem?

Water hyacinth forms dense mats which can completely smother waterways and reduce water quality. The mats exclude native plants, block dams and waterways, impede drainage and disrupt recreational activities. Water hyacinth is frost-tender but when in the form of a dense mat, it tolerates moderate frosts.

Water hyacinth reproduces from seeds which may remain viable for 20 years. It also reproduces vegetatively, young plants can grow from roots and can also produce seed within 3 to 4 weeks.



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Control Methods

The water hyacinth eradication programme includes containment of known infestations and treatment or physical removal to eradicate the plants. Due to the longevity of the seed, sites are monitored for a total of 20 years subsequent to no detections, to ensure elimination of the infestation.

Related Links

Ministry for Primary Industries <http://apps.mpi.govt.nz/applications/nzpests-view/Article/530/Water-Hyacinth>

New Zealand Plant Conservation Network http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.aspx?ID=3857

NZ Flora <http://www.nzflora.info/factsheet/Taxon/Eichhornia-crassipes.html>

Unwanted Organisms Register https://www1.maf.govt.nz/uor-cgi/uor.pl/show?species_id=21752

NIPR programme <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/biosecurity/long-term-biosecurity-management-programmes/national-interest-pest-responses-programme/>

NZ Freshwater Weed and Pest Visual Guide <https://www.thisisus.nz/assets/Resources/New-Zealand-freshwater-weed-and-pest-visual-guide.pdf>

Freshwater Invasive Species Guide 2020 https://niwa.co.nz/sites/default/files/Freshwater%20invasive%20species%20of%20New%20Zealand%202020_1.pdf

Weedbusters <https://www.weedbusters.org.nz/what-are-weeds/weed-list/water-hyacinth/>

Check Clean Dry <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/biosecurity/exotic-pests-and-diseases-in-new-zealand/active-biosecurity-responses-to-pests-and-diseases/exotic-freshwater-clams-corbicula/stop-clams-from-spreading/>

Rules

Under Section 52 and 53 of the Biosecurity Act 1993 no person can sell, propagate, breed, distribute or otherwise spread any pest in a Pest Management Plan, or any unwanted organism. Not complying with Section 52 or 53 is an offence under the Act, and may result in penalties noted in Section 157(1).

The National Pest Plant Accord is designed to prevent the sale, distribution and propagation of a set list of pest plants (the Accord list) within New Zealand. If allowed to spread further, these pest plants could seriously damage the New Zealand economy and environment.