

WATER HYACINTH

The threat

Water hyacinth is a threat to New Zealand's freshwater aquatic plants and animals and can block open waterways very quickly.

Why is water hyacinth a pest?

Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) is one of the world's most serious water weeds because of its aggressive fast-growing nature. Plants can form dense mats that reduce the water quality, change water flows and increase sediment. Water hyacinth crowds out native aquatic plants and animals, altering ecosystems, destroying habitats, and blocking irrigation systems.

Importing water hyacinth to New Zealand was prohibited for over 90 years.

Water hyacinth is one of the pests being eradicated under the National Interest Pest Response programme led by Biosecurity New Zealand in partnership with regional councils. It is both a notifiable organism and an unwanted organism under the Biosecurity Act 1993 and is banned from sale, propagation and distribution.

Where is it found?

Water hyacinth has been recorded in several other sites in New Zealand, mostly in the North Island. Many of these sites are small garden ponds or water gardens in containers. While it is affected by temperature, water hyacinth is able to grow in most North Island lowland areas and warmer coastal regions of the South Island. The national eradication programme has ensured that most sites are now free of water hyacinth plants. Remaining sites will be actively managed until eradication has been achieved.

What is water hyacinth?

A native of South America, water hyacinth is usually a free-floating freshwater plant that forms dense floating mats in still or slow-flowing water. It has shiny round leaves that are bright green and forms a rosette of leaves with feathery roots that hang down in the water. The leaf stems on young plants have a bulbous base.

Water hyacinth flowers from mid-summer to early autumn. The flower stalk may have up to 20 flowers on it. Flowers are pale lilac with a deep blue-bordered yellow spot on the uppermost of the six petals. The flower stalk bends underwater when fertilised to release many small seeds that sink to the bottom of the waterway.

What should I do if I find water hyacinth?

You can help us to get rid of water hyacinth. If you have seen it or suspect you have seen it, please contact the Ministry for Primary Industries on freephone 0800 80 99 66.

For more information visit: www.mpi.govt.nz/waterhyacinth



Water hyacinth



Water hyacinth infestation