

Water hyacinth

Eichhornia crassipes

Description

In its southern range, it doubles in size in two weeks. Considered to be one of the most troublesome aquatic weeds in the world; seems persistent in the lower Detroit River/western Lake Erie, unclear if it is dying off in mild winters.

Habit

Free floating aquatic plant; 0.5-1 m (1.5-3 ft) tall; distinctive air bladders that keep leaves afloat; forms dense, floating mats.

Leaves

Thick, waxy, round, broad, 10-20 cm (4-8 in) in diameter, cuplike, glossy, green in color.

Stems

Spongy; erect; stems up to 50 cm (20 in) long; inflated with air bladders towards the base.



Flowers

Showy, lavender-blue in color, 6 petals, upper petals with a central, yellow blotch; 8-15 flowers occur on a single spike that can be up to 30 cm (1 ft) long; bloom mid-summer.

Fruits and Seeds

Seed pod, 3 celled, many tiny seeds.

Habitat

Native to the Amazon Basin. Found primarily in southern and western wetlands, marshes, ponds, lakes, and rivers.

Reproduction

By fragmentation of stolons, adventitious root system, and to a lesser extent by seed.

Similar

Pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*) has purple flower spikes, lacks the conspicuous air bladder; not mat-forming.

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Monitor ditches, ponds, wetlands, lakes and rivers along the lower Detroit River for this species. Most recognizable in bloom (late summer, early fall). Hand pull small populations; several herbicides are effective. Permits are usually required for herbicide use in water bodies and wetlands. For information see MDEQs Aquatic Nuisance Control website at: www.michigan.gov/deqinlandlakes. As this species is not widely distributed in Michigan, it is important to document new occurrences. Please obtain

flowering or fruiting specimens and submit to: Anton Reznicek, Curator (Vascular Plants), University of Michigan Herbarium, 3600 Varsity Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48108-2287.

Credits

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