

## 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](http://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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