water hyacinth

Eichhornia crassipes (Mart) Solms

EICR



Fig. 1 UGA 1391152

Problem: Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) is native to tropical South America and was introduced as a water garden plant to the southern U.S. as an ornamental in 1884.[1] It has yet to be found growing in the wild in New England.[2]

Habit: This free floating plant can form large mats with individual plants growing up to 0.5m above the water surface (Fig. 1).[2] Decomposing plants can lower the dissolved oxygen in the water and mats of vegetation limits light availablility, altering the aquatic ecosystem.[1]

Reproduction: Water hyacinth's primary mode of dispersal is by vegetative stolons (horizontal runners), although it can reproduce sexually as well.[3] Vegetative reproduction can happen rapidly, in some cases a population can double in size in two weeks.[1] Fruits and seeds are rarely produced, but when they are, seeds can last for 20 years (Fig. 2). Vegetative growth begins in the early spring, with seedlings often found on mud banks.[3]



Fig. 2 UGA 5376438



Fig. 3 UGA 5271035

AQ HERB

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Fig. 4 UGA 5271035



Fig. 5 UGA 1237096

Leaves and Stem: The leaves of water hyacinth are thick, glossy and waxy and are elliptic or oval shaped (Fig. 3).[1] The 15cm wide leaves have a bulbous, inflated petiole that is thick and spongy, providing the plant's bouancy (Fig. 4).[2,3] As much as 1/2 the biomass of an individual can be roots.[1]

Flowers: Blooming in mid-summer for northern areas, the flowers grow in a panicle along a single stem (Fig. 5).[2] The flowers measure 5-7cm in diameter and are purplish-blue to lavender pink.[1] Flowers have six petals, with the uppermost petal displaying a distinctive yellow splotch with a dark blue border (Fig. 6).[1]

Habitat: Water hyacinth can grow in a variety of freshwater systems, often found in ponds, rivers, resevoirs and even ditches of the southeastern U.S.[1,2] Nutrient rich waterbodies are especially susceptible.[3]

Similar Species: American spongeplant **(***Limnobium spongia),* looks similar, but has heart-shaped leaves, and lacks the inflated petiole of water hyacinth.[3]



Fig. 6
UGA 531534

Eichhornia crassipes (Mart) Solms **(water hyacinth)**

Text Citations:

1. Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health and USDA APHIS PPQ. University of Georgia. URL: http://www.invasive.org
2. IPANE: Invasive Plant Atlas of New England. 2009. Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT, USA.URL: http://www.ipane.org
3. Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council Invasive Plant Manual. URL: http://www.se-eppc.org/manual/EICR.html

Photograph Information:

Figure 1 (photographer: John D. Byrd, Mississippi State University)

Figure 2 (photographer: Julia Scher, USDA APHIS PPQ)

Figure 3 (photographer: Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut)

Figure 4 (photographer: Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut)

Figure 5 (photographer: Josh Hillman, FloridaNature.org)

Figure 6 (photographer: Vladimir Dinets, University of Miami)

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