

# 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 increase water loss through evapo-transpiration, lower the amount of oxygen in the water, change water flows and increase sediment. Water hyacinth crowds out native aquatic plants and animals, altering ecosystems and destroying habitats.

Importing water hyacinth to New Zealand was prohibited in 1927.

Water hyacinth is one of the pests being eradicated under the National Interest Pest Response programme funded and led by MAF Biosecurity New Zealand in partnership with regional councils and the Department of Conservation. 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 at about 100 sites in New Zealand, mostly in the North Island. Many 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.

## 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 may anchor itself to sediment in shallow water. The shiny round leaves are bright green. Each plant forms a rosette of leaves with feathery roots that hang down in the water. The rosettes are linked by runners.

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 lobes. 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 MAF Biosecurity New Zealand on freephone **0800 80 99 66**.

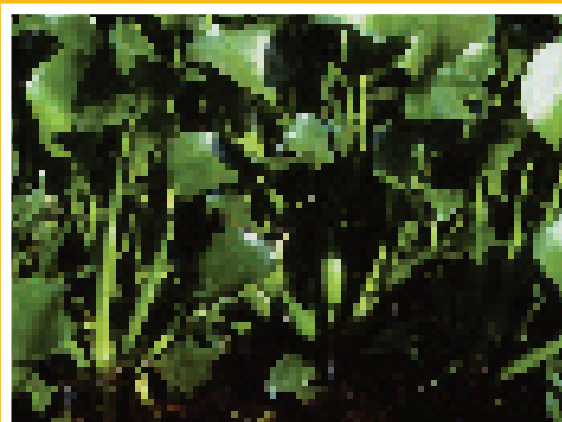


WATER HYACINTH PLANT

Photo courtesy of NIWA



WATER HYACINTH



WATER HYACINTH

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.BIOSECURITY.GOV.T.NZ](http://WWW.BIOSECURITY.GOV.T.NZ)**

June 2009