

Chapter 15: Introduction to the Plant Monographs

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Eleven of the thirteen aquatic and wetland plants described in this chapter have one thing in common: they are of foreign origin. In addition, most were intentionally introduced to North America by humans. While native aquatic plants can sometimes become problematic, the plants in this chapter have caused significant economic and ecological damage to ecosystems throughout North America and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. If you live in an area where none of these plants are found, you are among the fortunate few. You and your neighbors should make every effort to prevent the introduction and movement of these noxious weeds in your area.

The authors of the following plant descriptions have devoted years to researching the biology and control of these invasive species. Each weed species included in this chapter has distinct characteristics that cause it to be invasive and requires different techniques for control, but all authors agree on one concept – prevention is the most efficient and cost-effective method to protect natural areas from invasion by these noxious species.

A wealth of information is available on the internet about invasive species in general and the species described in this chapter. Excellent reference sources include local sites such as your state environmental protection agency and state invasive species working groups. National resources include the following websites:

- The United States Environmental Protection Agency: <http://www.epa.gov/>
- The University of Florida Aquatic Plant Information Retrieval System Online Database: <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/APIRS>
- The University of Florida Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants: <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/>
- USDA NRCS. The PLANTS Database. National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, LA: <http://www.plants.usda.gov/>
- US Army Corps of Engineers Aquatic Plant Information System: <http://el.erdc.usace.army.mil/aqua/apis/apishelp.htm>

Information and knowledge are the keys to prevention. Familiarize yourself with the characteristics of the invasive species described in this chapter so that you can positively identify them in the field. If you encounter a new population of one of these weeds, immediately notify the appropriate agency in your state and provide them with as much information as possible, including the location of the population. We are all responsible for the protection and stewardship of the ecosystem and your attention to detail can play a critical role in preventing the spread of these invasive species.

