

NECESSITY OF AQUATIC PLANT MANAGEMENT



MANAGEMENT IS NECESSARY FOR RECREATION, NAVIGATION, BIODIVERSITY AND MORE.

Invasive plants harm Florida's natural environment and lead to a loss of biodiversity and ecosystem health. They usually cannot be completely eradicated and will grow back quickly if not managed consistently.

Florida's fresh waters include about 7,700 lakes and ponds, and 1,400 rivers and streams. Without invasive plant management, native plants and animals would be pushed out, resulting in residents and visitors being unable to enjoy native Florida. Additionally, invasive plants can hinder flood protection, harbor mosquito larvae, and impede navigation.

What is an invasive plant?

Of the more than 4,000 plant species found in Florida, 1,300 (1 in 3 plants in the wild) or more are non-native or exotic, meaning they come from other countries or from other regions within the U.S. At least **130** of these exotic plant species are invasive, spreading rapidly throughout Florida's natural areas. **When they cause environmental or economic harm, they are considered invasive.**

What is the problem?

In their native ranges, plants generally do not become a nuisance. Today, with modern transportation, many exotic plants have caught a free ride to Florida. Once here, they are free from natural enemies, such as animals, insects and plants that existed in their home range. **Without natural enemies, plants can outgrow and replace Florida's native plants.**

When invasive plants replace native plants, they:

- Deter native wildlife dependent on native plants from using the area
- Fill completely and/or cover the water, damaging habitat and diversity.
- Increase sediment or muck accumulated at the bottom of water bodies.
- Excessive infestations cause economic losses to recreational use and property values.

Keeping things under control

Research shows most invasive plant species will never be eradicated from Florida; they simply reproduce too fast. However, managing agencies strive to keep them at less harmful levels. Regular management of invasive plants reduces overall environmental and economic damage and maintains habitat for native ecosystems.

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