

Biosecurity New Zealand
Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

Water hyacinth

Water hyacinth (*Pontederia crassipes*) is an invasive fast-growing aquatic plant. It forms dense mats which can completely smother large waterways and badly impact water quality.

What does water hyacinth look like?

- Clusters of flowers on a stalk can be seen mid-summer to early autumn.
- Flowers are pale lilac with a bright yellow spot, surrounded by dark purple.
- Rosettes of bright green, shiny leaves.
- Feathery roots that hang down in water.
- Young plants have a swollen, bulbous stem base.

Why is water hyacinth a pest?

A native of South America, water hyacinth is one of the world's most serious water weeds because of its invasive, fast-growing nature. Plants can form dense mats that reduce the water quality, change water flows, increase sediment and create a drowning risk. Water hyacinth crowds out native aquatic plants and animals, altering ecosystems, destroying habitats, and blocking irrigation systems.

Where is it found in NZ?

Water hyacinth has been recorded at several locations across New Zealand, predominantly in the North Island.



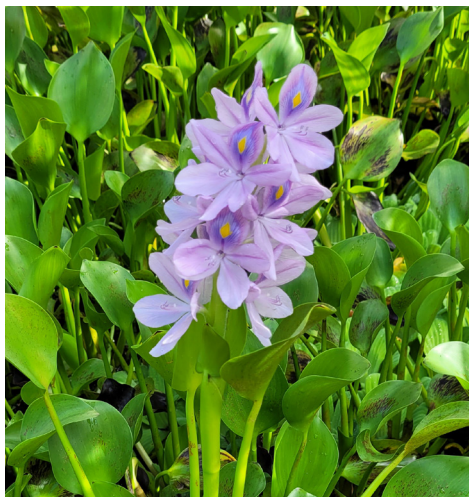
Water hyacinth infestation in a pond in Northland

While it has mainly been found in garden ponds, escaped plants have established in waterways and wetlands.

Water hyacinth is an unwanted organism under the Biosecurity Act 1993. It is illegal to sell, grow, display, or distribute it, and any sightings must be reported immediately to Biosecurity New Zealand.



Juvenile water hyacinth



Water hyacinth flower



Adult water hyacinth

If you see or suspect it, call **0800 80 99 66** or visit **report.mpi.govt.nz**
For more information: **www.mpi.govt.nz/NIPR**

New Zealand Government
Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa

September 2026