



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 322 N. Commercial St Bellingham WA 98225
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YELLOW FLAG IRIS

Iris pseudacorus

THREAT: Yellow flag iris, also called yellow flag or yellow water-flag is a wetland plant, native to Europe, which was introduced to the United States as an ornamental plant in the early 1900s. It has also been planted for erosion control and used in sewage treatment systems. It has become established throughout much of the U.S., in wet meadows and along wetland margins. Yellow flag iris can form dense mats, out competing and excluding native vegetation. It is fast growing and spreads quickly by underground rhizomes. It also reproduces by seed, and both the seeds and pieces of rhizome can be spread downstream by water. This iris can survive extended periods without water, as well as extended periods of low soil oxygen. It is also tolerant of a wide range of soil pH. Yellow flag iris can cause gastroenteritis in cattle, pigs and humans. It can also cause skin irritation in people.

DESCRIPTION: Yellow flag iris is an herbaceous perennial that grows 2 to 5 feet tall. It grows in upright clumps in water up to 10 inches deep. The large, flat, sword-like leaves are about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wide, with parallel veins. The leaves die back in the winter in colder areas but persist through the winter in areas with mild temperatures. The roots grow 4 to 12 inches long and the plant sends out rhizomes that spread quickly. The flowers consist of three showy yellow sepals, often with dark brown markings, and three smaller yellow petals. Flower stalks can grow 3 to 4 feet tall, with one to several flowers per stem. Flowering occurs in the spring in southern areas (i.e. Florida) and in the summer in more northern areas. When not flowering, yellow flag iris can be mistaken for cattail or other iris species. Although this iris usually grows in freshwater, it has been found growing in salt marshes in Scotland.



MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Yellow flag iris can be controlled through mechanical and chemical methods. Small infestations can be dug by hand. Care must be taken to remove as many rhizomes as possible and sites must be revisited in subsequent seasons to ensure eradication is complete. Plants may be managed by cutting the plants below the water line during the growing season. Contact the weed control board for chemical recommendations or visit the Board's website at <http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/930/Noxious-Weed-Fact-Sheets> for the publication: "Control Options for Yellow Flag Iris"