

Yellow Flag Iris

Iris pseudacorus

Iridaceae Family

Non-Designated Noxious Weed: Control Recommended

Identification Tips

- Perennial, emergent freshwater plant
- Grows to 5 feet tall in dense stands
- Has dark green to blue-green long, flat, pointed leaves that are folded and overlap one another
- Flowers are yellow, showy and occasionally have brown to purple veins at the base of the petals
- Has numerous thick, tough rhizomes
- Seed pods resemble little bunches of green bananas

Biology

- Blooms from late April through June
- In mild years will remain green all winter
- Reproduces by floating seeds and rhizomes
- Seeds move by wind and wave action; rhizome pieces can break off, establishing in new locations
- Grows in shallow, freshwater ponds, wetlands, lake and river edges
- When not in flower or seed, can be confused with cattails (*Typha sp.*) which do not have folded leaves

Impacts

- Spreads quickly and widely, crowding out native species with impenetrable mats
- Clogs small streams and irrigation systems

Distribution

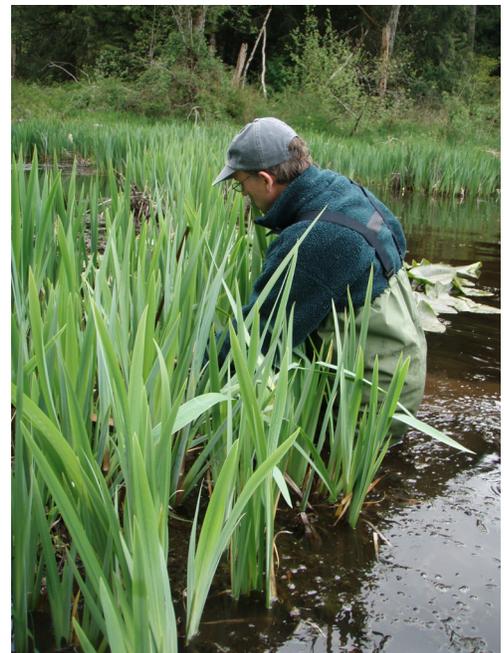
- Widespread throughout King County
- Present along most lake shores and many stream banks in developed areas of county

Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control
Program Line: **206-477-9333**
www.kingcounty.gov/weeds



Yellow flag iris has showy, yellow flowers that bloom from late April through June.



Growing in dense patches, yellow flag iris crowds out native species and quickly fills in shallow wetlands.

What You Can Do

While there is no legal requirement for controlling yellow flag iris in King County, the King County Noxious Weed Control Board recognizes this plant as invasive and recommends prevention of spread into uninfested areas and control in waterbodies where feasible.

Control Methods

Survey the area for weeds, set priorities, check on permitting issues and select the best control methods for the site and conditions. Permits are generally required for any control methods (hand-pulling, mechanical, chemical) done in natural waterbodies such as lakes and wetlands. Contact the King County Noxious Weed Control Program for permit guidance.

Prevention: Don't plant yellow flag iris in natural waterbodies. It is legal to buy this species for use as an ornamental planting, but it should be restricted to small, self-contained private ponds and not allowed to go to seed. Clean any tools or machinery used in an infested area before moving to another site.

Manual: Dig up small isolated patches with pick-axes or hatchets, making sure to get the entire rhizome. When removing plants manually, care should be taken to protect the skin; resins in the leaves and rhizomes can cause irritation in some people. Manual control can be successful for a small area if repeated on a regular basis; however, this method is impractical for large infestations. Cutting below water level before flowering can be effective if plants remain submerged all year. Make sure to remove all pulled/cut plant pieces from the water. Home composting is not recommended as rhizomes can continue to grow even after months without water, although commercial composting should be sufficiently hot to destroy the rhizomes.

Mechanical: Repeated mowing or cutting may keep yellow flag iris contained and can potentially kill it by depleting the energy in the rhizomes after several years of intensive mowing.

Cultural: Burning is not recommended. Seeds germinate and grow well after burning and plants that have been burned have a tendency to resprout. Small patches can be covered with a heavy tarp for a few years. Tarp should extend beyond the edges of the patch.

Chemical: Herbicides may be the most effective and cost-effective option for eradication of large infestations. Professional, licensed contractors are available to hire for this method. In Washington state specially formulated aquatic herbicides are only available for purchase to licensed applicators. Applying herbicides to water requires a permit from Washington State Department of Ecology in most cases. **NEVER apply non-aquatic herbicide formulations to water since most of them include ingredients that are toxic to aquatic organisms.** When using a chemical application, monitor the area of treatment for new plants germinating from the seed bank for several years after application. Treatment may take several years. Eradicate any new growth using one of the manual control methods listed above. Please contact the King County Noxious Weed Control Program if you have questions.



It may look like a pretty flower from afar, but yellow flag iris is a troublesome, weedy invader.