



Florida Department of Environmental Protection

INFORMATION BULLETIN 10

Native Aquatic Plants

The Benefits of Native Aquatic Plants Along the Shoreline

Plants form the base of the food web upon which all living things depend. Aquatic plants turn sunlight into plant matter and form the base of the food web that nurtures all aquatic animals.

Benefits of native aquatic plants include:

- ▶ Nursery areas and refuge for small fish.
- ▶ A buffer zone reducing bank erosion from waves and boat wakes.
- ▶ A food source for waterfowl, manatees, and other aquatic animals.
- ▶ A living surface for small insects that are an important food source for fish.
- ▶ A natural water purification system.
- ▶ Aesthetically pleasing wild flowers.
- ▶ Nesting sites for birds.

Are all aquatic plants weeds? **NO!!**

The vast majority of plant species growing in Florida waters are considered beneficial and only rarely become a problem. Most native plants have restraints that limit their abundance preventing them from becoming weeds. The major weed species clogging Florida's waterways are non-native like the South American water-hyacinth and the African-Asian hydrilla. In the absence of natural enemies, these non-native weeds grow uncontrolled and rapidly invade new areas forming dense stands.



Aquatic plants along the shoreline next to a dock.

WHERE DO I GO FOR HELP?

In regional offices around the state, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection has biologists who can provide permitting information and make recommendations on aquatic plant control (see their addresses on the back). Please contact the office that is responsible for the county in which you live, or visit the bureau's website at:

www.dep.state.fl.us/lands/invaspec/index.htm

Regional Offices

Northwest Office

3900 Commonwealth Blvd., MS705,
Tallahassee, FL 32399
850-488-5631

Counties: Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Leon, Liberty, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Wakulla, Walton, Washington, and Jefferson.

Suwannee River Office

1498 S. Country Club Rd.,
Lake City, FL 32025
386-758-0464

Counties: Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Columbia, Dixie, Duval, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Nassau, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor, and Union.

Southwest Florida Office

6355 South Florida Avenue,
Floral City, FL 34436
352-726-8622

Counties: Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Levy, Marion, and Sumter.

St. John's River Office

5882 South Semoran Blvd.,
Orlando, FL 32822
407-275-4004

Counties: Brevard, Flagler, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, St. Johns, and Volusia.

South Central Florida Office

2001 Homeland-Garfield Road,
Bartow, FL 33830
863-534-7074

Counties: Highlands and Polk

South Gulf Office

8302 Laurel Fair Circle, Suite 140,
Tampa, FL 33610
813-744-6163

Counties: Charlotte, Desoto, Hardee, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, and Sarasota.

South Florida Office

3111B-13 Fortune Way,
Wellington, FL 33414
561-791-4720

Counties: Broward, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Indian River, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Okeechobee, Palm Beach, and St. Lucie.



Are you exempt from obtaining a DEP Aquatic Plant Management Permit?

The Department of Environmental Protection requires an Aquatic Plant Management Permit to control or remove aquatic vegetation from waters of the state. However, there are exemptions. If you are not sure, contact the regional office that is responsible for your county.

No permit is required:

- ▶ Where the waterbody is wholly owned by one person (other than the state) provided there is no connection to Waters of Special Concern
- ▶ Artificially created waters (Class IV) used exclusively for agricultural purposes provided there is no connection to Waters of Special Concern
- ▶ Electrical power plant cooling ponds and waterbodies unless connected to waters designated as manatee aggregation sites
- ▶ Waterbodies of 10 surface acres or less provided there is no connection to Waters of Special Concern
- ▶ In a specific area of a waterbody where a dredge and fill activity is permitted by DEP

What about lake front and riparian homeowners?

According to Florida Statute 369.20 (8) no permit is required when a riparian owner (example: a lake front homeowner), living on a freshwater body that is not designated an Aquatic Preserve or an Outstanding Florida water, physically or mechanically removes aquatic plants and semi-woody plants, such as shrub species and willow, within an area delimited by up to 50 percent of the property owner's frontage or 50 feet, whichever is less, and by a sufficient length waterward from, and perpendicular to, the riparian owner's shoreline to create a corridor to allow access for a boat or swimmer to reach open water. All unvegetated areas shall be cumulatively considered when determining the width of the exempt corridor as illustrated below:

