

Water Hyacinth in Florida

Then and Now

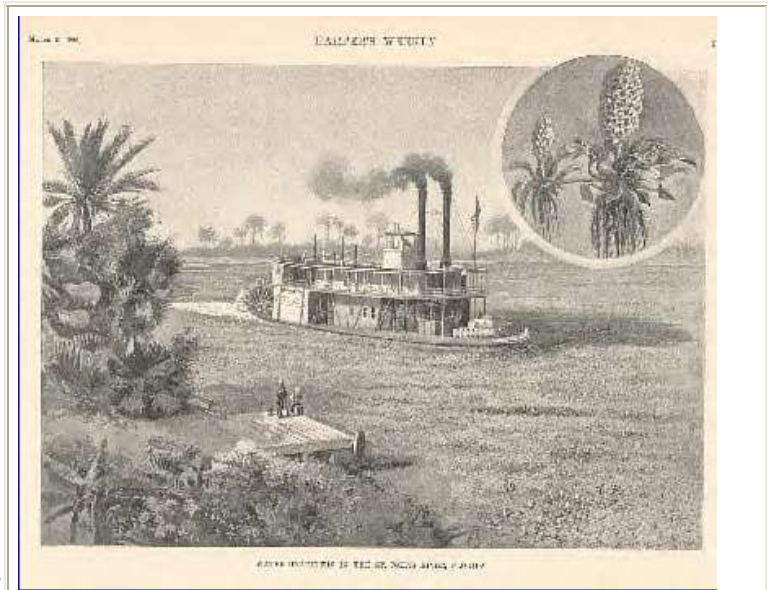


"WATER HYACINTHS AREN'T SOMETHING WE HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THESE DAYS," said the fisherman while boating the St. Johns River. "Used to be I couldn't get my boat into the water, there were so many plants, but today there's not a problem."

The fisherman is only partly correct - he *is* able to get his boat into the river now - because there are only few water hyacinth plants now. But he's also incorrect, because we *do* have to worry about water hyacinths today.

Florida has been managing water hyacinths for more than 100 years and has succeeded in greatly reducing the number of these plants. So for many people the water hyacinths don't seem to be a problem at all.

Florida spends over \$70 million dollars in plant management every year. If not for this maintenance effort our lakes, rivers, canals and wetlands would quickly be covered by invasive aquatic plants.



This illustration and article about water hyacinth infesting Florida's St. Johns River are from an 1898 issue of *Harper's Weekly* magazine.

Today there are many significant non-naïve aquatic and terrestrial plants on the loose in Florida's waters and wetlands. Hydrilla, water hyacinth, melaleuca, and torpedo grass are very costly in terms of management and control. This management effort actually protects Florida's natural environment and our tourism industry.

For more information on the subject, visit: <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/guide/intrguid.html>

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Name: _____ Class Period: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Answer the following questions using information from the passage above.

1. Are water hyacinths a problem in Florida today?

2. How much money does the state of Florida spend on the removal of water hyacinths?

3. Do you think we should spend that much money on removing water hyacinth?

4. What do you think will happen if we don't remove water hyacinth from our rivers and lakes?

5. What would you do if you were responsible for a lake or waterbody that was overgrown with water hyacinth?

