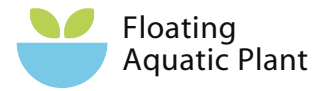


## Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*)



*Grows extremely fast and forms dense mats*



*Large, lavender-coloured flowers*

Water hyacinth is a perennial freshwater aquatic plant that floats on the surface of still and slow-moving streams. It grows extremely quickly, and just 25 plants can produce a mat of over one hectare in a single growing season. It is frost sensitive, but some plants within dense mats can survive moderate frosts.

Both its leaves and flowers are distinctive. The large, lavender-coloured flowers with a yellow eye-spot on the largest petal occur in very beautiful spikes. The glossy, smooth, leathery leaves have spongy air-filled tissues in the leaf stalks to help them float. A thick mass of feather roots hangs in the water. Seeds are produced and these may remain viable for up to 15 years.

Wind, water, machinery and equipment assist the dispersal of both seeds and plant fragments.

**This is an aggressive and invasive weed that could do very serious damage to New Zealand's waterways. It is a notifiable organism and is subject to a MAF eradication programme. All sightings must be reported to MAF's contracted control agency, AgriQuality New Zealand (phone: 0508 00 11 22), who will arrange for its clearance and disposal.**