

Non-indigenous Invasive Aquatic Plant Species

By Mike Hellweg, HAP Chairman

As most of you know, a few of the aquatic plant species that we as hobbyists have used for years have become established in places where they should not be; namely, various bodies of water here in the USA. Sometimes these introductions were intentional, other times accidental. Either way, though, the damage has been the same. Native species have been displaced, or even eliminated. Valuable Wetland habitat has been damaged or destroyed, which affects the fishes that we all love, as well as the quality of life for all of us.

Therefore, in order to keep up with the new regulations, we have modified the HAP rules to do our own small part in helping to control these species. I would suggest that we also ban them from club auctions. If anyone spots these plants in someone's tanks, they might mention to them that these plants might be invasive if they accidentally get into natural bodies of water. Most of them cannot survive winter temperatures, so they have not been banned nationally, but many States do ban them from within their borders. To be on the safe side, I would suggest NOT selling or distributing these plants, or, even better, getting rid of them altogether. The only safe way for hobbyists to dispose of them is to dry them out and burn them. NEVER FLUSH THEM DOWN THE DRAIN! Composting is not a safe alternative.

As of 9/8/2000, the last time I can find that the law and list were updated, Federal law bans INTERSTATE sale, distribution, or transportation of the plants on the list. Banning possession appears to be left up to the individual States, as their situation warrants. Various State laws ban possession, as well. As of September of 2003, Missouri bans only one aquatic plant species outright: Purple Loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria*. The law prohibits the sale, distribution, transportation, or POSSESSION, of Purple Loosestrife; including its roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruits or seeds. If you spot this plant in the wild, report it to the Missouri Department of Agriculture as soon as possible. They have set up a Task Force to eradicate this plant.

There are only a few species on the list. With the many hundreds of species of beautiful aquatic plants available that are NOT harmful, invasive or in any way damaging to the environment, why even think of using these few species that are? Be responsible with all plants, and fish, for that matter, and dispose of them properly. Don't just flush your problem down the drain. It might come back to haunt us all!

Prohibited Species List:

Certain plant species have not only become established in the wild, but have actually done so well that they are now considered a noxious weed or a nuisance species. Local, State, and Federal Government agencies spend many millions of dollars every year trying to control them. No responsible hobbyist should ever keep, sell or otherwise distribute, or discard any of these species in the wild or even down the drain. In fact, interstate distribution or sale and/or interstate transport of these species is illegal. Responsible hobbyists should destroy all plants on this list by drying and burning. Composting is not an acceptable way to dispose of these plants. The species below are on the Federal list. Currently, as of the end of 2003, the State of Missouri Department of Agriculture only lists Purple Loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria*, as a prohibited Aquatic Species. Possession, sale or any other type of distribution of Purple Loosestrife without a special permit issued by the Missouri Department of Agriculture is prohibited.

Common Name

Scientific Name

Mosquito Fern, Water Velvet
Mediterranean Caulerpa

Azolla pinnata
Caulerpa taxifolia

Rooted or Anchored Water Hyacinth
Hydrilla
Common Hygro, Miramar Weed
Chinese Water Spinach
African Oxygen Weed
Giant Ambulia
Purple Loosestrife *
Melaleuca
Arrow-leafed Monochoria
Monochoria
Duck Lettuce
Arrowhead
Wavy-leaf Salvinia
Giant Salvinia
Herzog's Salvinia
Giant Salvinia
Wetland Nightshade
Exotic Bur Reed

Eichornia azurea
Hydrilla verticillata
Hygrophila polysperma
Ipomoea aquatica
Lagarosiphon major
Limnophila sessiflora
Lythrum salicaria
Melaleuca quinquenervia
Monochoria hastata
Monochoria vaginalis
Ottelia alismoides
Sagittaria sagittifolia
Salvinia auriculata
Salvinia biloba
Salvinia herzogii
Salvinia molesta
Solanum tampicense
Sparganium erectum

In addition, while *NOT* on the Federal or Missouri list yet, the following two species are listed on most State's lists of prohibited species so hobbyists should be aware of their status and avoid these as well. They will probably both be added to the Federal list in the coming years:

Water Hyacinth
Water Lettuce

Eichornia crassipes
Pistia stratiotes