Egeria

Egeria densa

What does it look like?

Bottom-rooted submerged perennial aquatic herb. Stems can be more than 3m in length. Leaves are up to 30mm long, 4mm wide, in whorls of four to five. Flowers are white, approximately 20mm in diameter, borne at the water's surface from November-January. All New Zealand plants are male, so no seed is set.

Grows in still to moderately flowing, well lit water bodies to a depth of about 7-8m. It prefers high nutrient water bodies and silty or sandy substrates. Optimum water temperatures, 10-25°C. Common in the North Island and parts of the South Island.

Why is it a problem?

History of invasiveness overseas. Shades out and displaces native species as well as the oxygen weeds Canadian pondweed and lagarosiphon (especially in warmer waters). Tolerates low light levels associated with turbidity. Less competitive in low nutrient water bodies.

Moved between water bodies by humans through deliberate releases as well as accidentally on machinery and fishing equipment. Public accessibility of site strongly predicts invasion likelihood. Spreads within catchments via natural water movement. Common in the North Island.

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Control Methods

Freshwater weeds are difficult to eradicate once established, but are possible to control. In narrow waterways you can reduce the growth of aquatic weeds with riparian planting to reduce light levels.

Before you start, thoroughly check the waterway's adjacent areas and outflows to see if the infestation has spread. Talk to us first, to get advice and check whether you can carry out control yourself. Don't make an infestation worse by spreading fragments downstream!

Small ponds

Remove egeria by digging and raking it up. Leave it on land to dry up and die. Follow up regularly to remove regrowth.

Bottom lining: If possible, lower the water level and cover the infestation with black polythene or weedmat (weighted down) for about three months.

Large infestations and open waterways

Herbicide: Diquat is effective in controlling egeria, but there are regulations around its use. Check with us first, as spraying in or over water may require resource consent. Always start control work at the upstream end of an infestation.

CAUTION: When using herbicide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and safety requirements are followed.

Biological control

Grass carp can be used as a weed control agent in some cases. This requires a permit - contact the Department of Conservation for more information.

Related Links

Ministry for Primary Industries http://apps.mpi.govt.nz/applications/nzpests-view/Article/859/Egeria
Unwanted Organisms Register https://www1.maf.govt.nz/uor-cgi/uor.pl/show?species_id=26105
NZ Flora http://www.nzflora.info/factsheet/Taxon/Egeria-densa.html
New Zealand Plant Conservation Network http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.aspx?ID=3853
Weedbusters https://www.weedbusters.org.nz/what-are-weeds/weed-list/egeria/
Department of Conservation https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/apply-for-permits/interacting-with-freshwater-species/options-for-weed-control/grass-carp/
NZ Freshwater Invasive Species Guide 2020 https://niwa.co.nz/sites/default/files/Freshwater%20invasive%20species%20of%20New%20Zealand%202020_1.pdf
Check Clean Dry https://www.mpi.govt.nz/biosecurity/exotic-pests-and-diseases-in-new-zealand/active-biosecurity-responses-to-pests-and-diseases/exotic-freshwater-clams-corbicula/stop-clams-from-spreading/

Rules

Under Section 52 and 53 of the Biosecurity Act 1993 no person can sell, propagate, breed, distribute or otherwise spread any pest in a Pest Management Plan, or any unwanted organism. Not complying with Section 52 or 53 is an offence under the Act, and may result in penalties noted in Section 157(1).

The National Pest Plant Accord is designed to prevent the sale, distribution and propagation of a set list of pest plants (the Accord list) within New Zealand. If allowed to spread further, these pest plants could seriously damage the New Zealand economy and environment.