Lagarosiphon (Oxygen Weed)

Lagarosiphon major

What does it look like?

Submerged, bottom-rooting aquatic perennial up to 5m. Leaves (16 x 2mm) have minute serrations along the edges, are arranged spirally around the stem, and are curved backwards or downwards. Tiny pinkish flowers are produced, but as only female plants are found in New Zealand, no seed is set.

Why is it a problem?

Grows rapidly in moderate to well-lit submerged sites ranging from low to high temperature, forming vast deep underwater 'meadows' that shade out smaller native species, and prevent seedlings of native species from establishing. There are no native plant competitors of similar height in New Zealand. Stems break easily, and fragments root downstream or wherever they are dumped, causing flooding. Rotting vegetation turns water stagnant, killing fauna and flora.

Control Methods

Freshwater weeds are difficult to eradicate once established, but are possible to control. Before you start thoroughly check the waterway's adjacent areas and inflows to see if the infestation has spread.

As most aquatic weeds grow from fragments, start control at the upstream end of the infestation. In narrow waterways you can reduce the growth of aquatic weeds with riparian planting to reduce light levels.

Physical control (small infestations)

Remove weeds by digging and raking them up. Dispose of them on land so they dry up and die. Follow up regularly to remove growth. Fragments will regrow, so be careful not to spread this plant further.

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

Herbicide control (large infestations)

Diquat is an effective herbicide for controlling Lagarosiphon, but there are regulations around its use. Check with GW, as spraying in or over water may require resource consent.

CAUTION: When using herbicide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY and follow ALL instructions and safety requirements.

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Related Links

New Zealand Plant Conservation Network http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.aspx?ID=3356
NZ Flora http://www.nzflora.info/factsheet/Taxon/Lagarosiphon-major.html
Unwanted Organisms Register http://apps.mpi.govt.nz/applications/nzpests-view/Article/622/Oxygen-weed
NZ Freshwater Weed and Pest Visual Guide https://www.thisisus.nz/assets/Resources/New-Zealand-freshwater-weed-and-pest-visual-guide.pdf
Freshwater Invasive Species Guide 2020 https://niwa.co.nz/sites/default/files/Freshwater%20invasive%20species%20of%20New%20Zealand%202020_1.pdf
Weedbusters https://www.weedbusters.org.nz/what-are-weeds/weed-list/oxygen-weed/
Department of Conservation https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/apply-for-permits/interacting-with-freshwater-species/options-for-weed-control/grass-carp/
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.