

Aquatic Invasive Species Fact Sheet

Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*)

DO NOT PLANT!

Caution: All parts of this plant are poisonous. Protect skin as resin in the leaves and rhizomes can cause skin irritation. Unpalatable to wildlife and livestock due to high levels of glycosides.

Wisconsin Status: Yellow Iris is a Restricted species under the Wisconsin Invasive Species Rule, Chapter NR 40. Regulations: It is illegal to buy, sell, give away, barter, transport, transfer, or introduced without a permit. Plant attractive natives as an alternative.

Threat: Yellow iris is an aggressive non-native aquatic perennial plant that easily escapes from cultivation into native habitats. It invades shorelines and open water areas of lakes, rivers, and wetlands and displaces native plants, alter species diversity, and reduces available habitat and food for fish and waterfowl. Dense infestations traps sediment, alters hydrology, clogs flood control ditches and culverts, causing economic harm.

Identification:

Spread: Seeds, rhizomes, rhizome fragments, and human activity.

Height: Up to 6 feet tall.

Flowers: Blooms April-July. Pale to bright yellow, up to 4 inches across. Three short petals in the center. The three outer, petal-like lobes of the blossom are sepals patterned with light brown to purple veins or flecks.

Leaves: Sword-like, flat, erect, and linear with a sharply raised midrib.

Fruit & Seeds: Seed capsules up to 4 inches long, angular, glossy green to brown as it ripens. Contains dozens of pale brown seeds arranged in 3 rows. Seeds have a hard outer casing and **can float**.

Roots: Thick rhizomes spread extensively and form thick mats and networks that crowd out native species. Rhizomes can float, survive prolonged dry conditions, and fragments can form new plants.





Native to: Europe, western Asia, and North Africa.

Ecological Impacts: Yellow iris is a fast-growing and fast-spreading non-native aquatic plant that forms dense stands of robust plants. It invades shorelines and shallow water areas of lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, bogs, swamps, ponds, and forest, ditches, and flood plains.

The dense, almost impenetrable, monotypic stands crowd out native plants, reduce habitat for wildlife and fish, reduce bird nesting and rearing sites, compact soil, and alter hydrology by trapping sediment.

Yellow iris does not provide food for native animals and contains large amounts of glycosides that are toxic to wildlife and grazing animals.

Spread: Spreads quickly by seeds that float and by underground rhizomes that send out new shoots above the ground and roots below. Stands of yellow iris develop thick mats of rhizomes that can connect several hundred plants. Fragments of rhizomes that break off can also form new plants. Seeds, stems and rhizomes escape into natural areas by wind, water movement, earthmoving equipment, transplanting and other human activities.

Similar Species: When not in flower, yellow iris may be confused with native species such as blue flag iris, cattails, or Sweet flag



Large stand of yellow iris growing in shallow water.

Control: Caution should be used if pulling out this plant as it causes skin irritations. Control efforts are most likely to succeed when plants are small and manageable. Use an integrated approach of monitoring for seedlings and re-growth and control efforts.

Mechanical: Removing flowers and seed capsules can prevent the spread.

Mowed plants will regenerate from the rhizomes, so plants must be cut multiple times to exhaust their energy reserves.

Digging is effective for removing small plants and plant populations. Remove as much plant debris as possible, particularly rhizomes. Dispose of in landfill or by burning. Plant natives in its place.

Caution: The disturbance associated with digging can result in shoreline and sediment erosion.

Chemical: Permits may be needed. Always check DNR regulations for the most up-to-date information regarding permits for control methods.

To report a yellow iris location and to learn more, visit www.dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/

This Fact Sheet was developed by Stephanie Boismenu, Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator, Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Department in partnership with the Three Lakes Waterfront Association. (S.B., 2020/R2022)

Photo credits: Stephanie Boismenu

Reference: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources: *Yellow iris (Iris pseudacorus)*: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/fact/YellowFlagIris.html>

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