

# Water lettuce

## *Pistia stratiotes*

Water lettuce is a free-floating aquatic plant native to Asia, Africa and equatorial America. It was first recorded in the Northern Territory in 1887, reaching pest proportion in Coastal Queensland in the 1950s. It is believed to have been transported into NSW in the 1990s via eel trappers from Queensland.



### Distribution

Isolated infestations of Water lettuce have occurred in coastal districts of NSW north of Sydney - in the Tweed River catchment at Piggabeen and Tyalgum, and the Richmond River catchment at Bungawalbin, Casino, Bonalbo and Wiangaree.

Isolated infestations have also been found at Macksville, Taree and Maitland. There is also an isolated infestation in the NSW portion of the Murray Darling Basin, in the Dumaresq River downstream of Texas.

### Description

Water lettuce is a perennial free-floating aquatic plant that can spread rapidly over still and slow-moving water bodies.

The plant grows in lettuce-like rosettes up to six inches in diameter, and are a light, lime green with velvet-like hairs.

Small flowers (up to 1.5 cm long) are hidden in the centre of the plant among the leaf bases. They are whitish-green in colour and flower throughout the year.

The fruit is a greenish berry, 5–10mm in diameter. Four to fifteen oblong shaped seeds occur in each berry. They are green at first then mature to a brown colour and are about 2mm long.

### Habitat

Water lettuce prefers stagnant, slow-moving freshwater environments. It is found in wetlands, small ponds, lakes, lagoons and farm dams.

### Reproduction and dispersal

Water lettuce has two modes of reproduction: the primary mode is by seed; the other is by stolons or pups, sometimes referred to as daughter plants. This enables this weed to establish itself quickly, growing best on still or slow-moving bodies of fresh water, such as farm dams, reservoirs, lakes, and creeks.





## Water lettuce *Pistia stratiotes*



(Photo sources: Rous County Council.)

### Declaration

#### Regional priority weed objective: Eradication

These weeds are present in limited distribution and abundance in some parts of the State. Elimination of the biosecurity risk posed by these weeds is a reasonably practical objective.

### Control

New infestations must be reported to local control authorities and identified and removed by Council officers after the location is recorded.

If you have seen, or think you have seen, Water lettuce please contact Rous County Council on (02) 6623 3800 for a positive identification and advice on control.

#### Chemical control

##### **Diquat 200g/L: Reglone®**

400ml per 100L of water | 5.0-10.0L/ha  
Add Agral 600 wetter, use clean water for best results.  
Observe withholding period.

##### **Glyphosate 360g/L:** Various trade names for aquatic use only.

1.0-1.3L in 100L water  
Best results are obtained from mid-summer through to winter. Use higher rate on dense infestations.

##### **2,4-D acid 300g/L: Affray 300®**

1.0 in 200L water  
Avoid causing submersion of sprayed plants.  
Coverage: 200L spray solution per 1000 square metres.

#### Non-chemical control

Physical removal of small infestations can be effective, but must be contained and not removed.

#### For further information contact:

**Rous County Council**  
**02 6623 3800**

[www.rous.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rous.nsw.gov.au)

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