



SEPTEMBER 2008

Salvinia molesta **SALVINIA**

One of the world's most serious aquatic weeds, *Salvinia* is often sold at fetes as a quick growing ornamental plant. It has the ability to double in area in 5-10 days.

DESCRIPTION

Salvinia is a free floating, mat forming perennial aquatic fern. It has slender stems 1–2 cm in diameter up to 30 cm long, varying with plant density. The leaves of *Salvinia* are in whorls of three, two on the surface and one submerged growing as modified roots. Leaves grow either as submerged brown leaves or emergent green leaves. The primary invading plant has small green leaves lying flat on top of the water. As the plant matures, green leaflets, 2-5 cm wide, are crowded together overlapping and folded together. The leaves are covered on the upper surface by hairs and often curled and slightly darker on the margins. *Salvinia* has no flower but has short stalked sterile spore sacs along submerged leaves.

EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Salvinia has the ability to double in area in 5-10 days. It forms dense floating mats up to 1 m thick excluding all other vegetation. This results in severe impacts on the ecology of the infested water body. *Salvinia* impedes water flow, is a harbour for disease and decreases water quality by depleting nutrients and oxygen in the water effecting aquatic life. The thick mats can give a false impression of solid ground and can be a drowning hazard to animals and children who can become tangled in the root system.

HABITAT

Salvinia is found in still or slow moving fresh to brackish water, particularly in ponds, lakes, swamps and dams. It can tolerate a wide range of temperatures and nutrient levels, but thrives in temperatures of 20-30°C and high nutrient levels.

In Sutherland Shire *Salvinia* can be found in backyard ponds and aquariums, sometimes swapped as 'pond weed'.



Salvinia leaves fold up when tightly crowded.
Source: Sutherland Shire Council

ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION

A native of Brazil, *Salvinia* is thought to have been introduced to Australia as an aquarium plant just after World War II. The first naturalised case was recorded in Luddenham NSW in 1952. It has often been sold or exchanged between friends as an ornamental pond or aquarium plant. *Salvinia* reproduces vegetatively (fragmentation). It spreads within an aquatic system through movement by wind and water. Inter-waterway spread occurs through dumping of pond and aquarium water and other movement by man and occasionally through animals in drinking water. *Salvinia* is now found in all states of Australia.

DECLARATION

Salvinia has been gazetted as a noxious weed in all states in Australia. The Noxious Weeds Act 1993 is an instrument serving the protection of our environment, general health of the community and agricultural production. Under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 all noxious weeds must be controlled. The act applies to all landowners and occupiers. This weed has a control category of class 2. For class 2 noxious weeds: *“the plant must be eradicated from the land and the land must be kept free of the plant”*. Failure to comply with the prescribed categories may result in a fine of 100 penalty units.

Salvinia is also one of the twenty ‘Weeds of National Significance’.

CONTROL

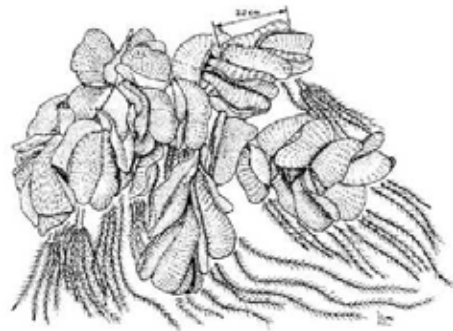
If you discover this weed, you must notify council within three days.

For small infestations in ponds hand removal is possible. Plants must be bagged and then left in the sun for a few days before they are disposed of. For larger infestations chemical and biological options are available. Contact council staff for advice before proceeding.



Salvinia infestations can completely cover the surface of a water body.

Source: Sutherland Shire Council



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Line Drawing of *Salvinia*.

Source University of Florida.

For further information contact
Bushcare or Greenweb Units
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Sutherland Shire
COUNCIL

