

PUTTING A CHOKE HOLD ON PROBLEM PLANTS

A water system is a uniquely balanced and sensitive environment. The vast majority of plant species growing in waters are considered beneficial and only rarely become problems. Natural forces limit the abundance of most native plants.

Many major aquatic weeds, however, have been introduced from foreign lands. In the absence of natural enemies, exotic weeds, such as hydrilla and water hyacinth, grow uncontrolled and rapidly invade new areas. When overgrown weeds interrupt a water system's balance, problems inevitably surface.

Joe Hinkle, environmental specialist, Florida Department of Natural Resources, estimates aquatic plants and algae in natural systems should cover 10 percent to 40 percent of a water body to provide the best habitat for fish and wildlife.

But when much more than 40 percent is covered, the natural water environment often is turned inside out. Overgrown aquatic weeds:

- Clog intake screens and turbines that produce hydroelectric power;
- Provide a breeding site for mosquitoes, carriers of human and animal disease;
- Hinder, or even close, navigation ways;
- Crowd out native vegetation essential for wildlife habitat;
- Restrict recreational activities like fishing, swimming and water skiing;
- Reduce or restrict water flow by as much as 90 percent in irrigation canals needed for crop production and in drainage ditches for flood control; and
- Reduce the value of properties and businesses nearby.

When aquatic problem weeds are managed, the environment responds positively.

Using specialty pesticides, as part of an integrated pest management system, to control unwanted water weeds gives other vegetation — types preferred by fish and beneficial aquatic insects — a better chance to compete. In fact, before aquatic products are registered, they undergo a myriad of tests to ensure no negative impact on fish and other aquatic species.

A well-balanced water body provides food, open areas and cover for waterfowl and other wildlife. Fish populations increase, and invertebrate foods, such as insects, snails and grass shrimp, thrive. A balanced aquatic environment produces oxygen vital to the survival of animal species.



Fish, birds and other animals thrive when bodies of water are free from overgrown vegetation.

D I D Y O U K N O W ?

Specialty pesticides contribute to a cleaner, healthier aquatic environment. By using specialty pesticides to keep aquatic weed growth in check, an aquatic maintenance program:

- Reduces management costs. Managed weed control allows a consistent flow of water into hydroelectric turbines, irrigation canals and drainage ditches. It keeps navigation ways open.
- Reduces complaints from the public. Weed control helps maintain strong property values for lakefront property owners.
- Increases recreational use and revenues. Weed control reduces fluctuations in water temperature, oxygen and pH levels, thus preventing fish kills.

Sport fish populations thrive in well-maintained bodies of water. Lake residents and their guests welcome the opportunity to swim, ski and enjoy other activities in weed-free water.