

Alligator weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*)



Alligator weed is a Weed of National Significance. It is regarded as one of the worst weeds in Australia because of its invasiveness, potential for spread, and economic and environmental impacts. Alligator weed has not become established in our region. It is essential that we are vigilant to ensure that any infestations are recognised and controlled quickly.

Description

Alligator weed can grow with roots embedded in the bank or on the bottom of shallow water bodies, or float freely on the water surface. It spreads its leaves across the water surface, forming dense mats. The long spreading stems are hollow, helping it to float. The roots are thin and stringy, and trail in the water from the joints between plant segments (the nodes).

When growing on land alligator weed is quite different in structure. The stems are shorter and barely hollow. Reddish-brown tap roots can reach depths exceeding 500mm. Whether it grows in water or on land, the shiny, dark green leaves occur in opposite pairs along the stem. The leaves are 20–70mm long and 5–40mm wide, with smaller veins almost perpendicular to a characteristic mid-line along the length of the leaf. The silvery-white flower is small (12–14mm wide) and papery, with a short stalk growing from either the axil (where the leaf joins the stem) or the very end of the stem

Impacts

When growing on land it displaces other more favourable plants such as crops or native vegetation, and can be harmful to animals.

When growing in fresh water, alligator weed can cover the entire water surface, preventing flow, blocking up drainage channels and potentially increasing flood damage. Weed mats can also reduce oxygen exchange, affecting instream plants and animals and reducing water quality.

Distribution

In South Australia, alligator weed poses a significant threat to key waterways, including the River Murray and smaller streams in the Mount Lofty Ranges, Kangaroo Island and the South-east. Although present in all Australian states, and naturalised in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, alligator weed threatens a wide range of wetlands and freshwater bodies.

Control methods

Early detection is vital to stop alligator weed becoming established in South Australia. If you see this weed, please report it to the National Pest Alert Hotline (Freecall) 1800 084 881.

Alligator weed has rarely, if ever, been successfully eradicated once it has infested a water body, despite numerous costly attempts. For this reason, the highest priority for the management of alligator weed in Australia is an effective system of early detection and eradication before infestations become established. The successful control of alligator weed in backyard situations has been achieved using the considerable experience and resources of local councils and state/ territory weed management agencies.

Declarations

The following sections of the *Landscape SA Act* apply to alligator weed in the Hills and Fleurieu region:

- 186(2) Cannot transport the plant or anything carrying it
- 188(1) Cannot sell the plant
- 188(2) Cannot sell any produce / goods carrying the plant
- 192(2) Landowner must control the plant on their land

Landholders must must notify the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board of any infestation of the plant found on their land.



Further information

Further information is available through Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu

Mount Barker Office:

Cnr Mann & Walker streets, Mount Barker
(08) 8391 7500



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