



# Aquatic Invasive Species Quick Guide



**Golden Sands**  
Resource Conservation  
& Development Council, Inc.

## Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus* L.)

**Description:** Yellow Iris is a non-native, perennial aquatic plant in the family Iridaceae that grows from rhizomes. Large, sword-like leaves are light-dark green, and sheath each other at the base. Several large, yellow flowers are held on a round or slightly flattened stalk. Each flower has three large, drooping sepals and three shorter petals. Plants grow in wet soil or emerge from shallow water, and reach 2-6 feet tall.



Yellow Iris produces many large, yellow flowers on a rigid stalk.

**North American Distribution:** Yellow Iris has been reported across most of the northern United States and Canada.

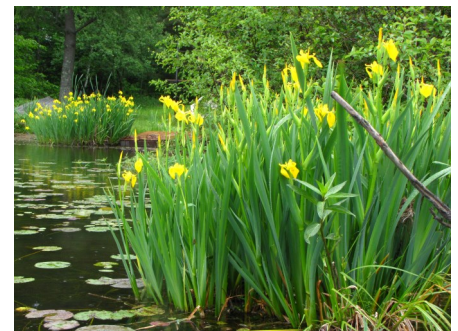


Long fruit capsules produce dozens of tan-brown, circular seeds.

**Dispersal Vectors:** Yellow Iris was introduced from Eurasia as an ornamental plant for water gardens and other wet sites. It spreads locally by rhizomes and by large, round seeds. Dislodged fragments of the rhizome can also produce new plants. Muskrats may transport yellow Iris short distances to build their huts, and waterfowl hunters may contribute to spread by using it in construction of hunting blinds. Yellow Iris is still sold in some nurseries and internet stores.

**Ecological Impacts:** Populations can spread quickly by rhizomes and seeds, crowding out valuable native plant species and decreasing plant and animal diversity. A study by Raven and Thomas in 1990 noted a large population of yellow Iris that had excluded all other vegetation, even cattails. Yellow Iris is unpalatable to wildlife and livestock due to high levels of glycosides.

**Control Options:** Manual removal of yellow Iris is difficult, because of its strong rhizome network. Removal of small clumps is easier in areas of soft, water-logged substrates, and these clumps should be grasped as far down the stem as possible and pulled straight up to have the best chance of removing the entire rhizome. Digging is also an option—care should be taken to get underneath the entire rhizome without breaking it, and removal of native species must be minimized. All plant material must be removed from the site and disposed of away from water bodies. Yellow Iris can cause skin irritation, so gloves should be worn when working with this species.



Large stands of yellow Iris in shallow water of a lake.

Yellow Iris can be controlled by glyphosate-based herbicides. Plants growing near standing water should be treated with an herbicide approved for aquatic use to minimize harm to amphibians.

No effective biological control agent is known at this time.

### Additional Information:

Jacobs, J. et al. 2010. Ecology and management of yellowflag Iris (*Iris pseudacorus* L.). Invasive Species Technical Note No. MT-28.

United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. 6pp.

Raven, P.H. and J.H. Thomas.. 1970. *Iris pseudacorus* in western North America. Madrono. 20:390-391

**Photo credit:** Paul Skawinski

This Quick Guide is part of a series on aquatic invasive species, and may be reproduced for educational purposes. Visit us at [www.uwsp.edu/uwexlakes/clmn](http://www.uwsp.edu/uwexlakes/clmn) or [www.goldensandsrccd.org/our-work/water](http://www.goldensandsrccd.org/our-work/water) to download this series of handouts.

Developed by Golden Sands Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council, Inc. as part of an aquatic invasive species (AIS) education program, supported by an AIS grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.