

# Yellow Flag Iris: Options for Control

**Yellow flag iris** (*Iris pseudocorus*), a class C noxious weed in Lincoln County, Washington, also known as **yellow flag**, **water flag** or **yellow iris**, is a wetland plant that is especially showy during its short blooming period. It is native to Europe, Great Britain, North Africa and the Mediterranean region. This good-looking plant has been transplanted into well-watered gardens all over the world and has widely escaped; it is also used in sewage treatment, and is known to be able to re-

move metals from waste-waters. Like cat-tails, yellow iris colonizes into large numbers, forming dense monotypic stands, outcompeting other plants. Yellow flag iris was added to the Lincoln County Noxious Weed List in 2007, after being discovered scattered along a stretch of Lake Roosevelt between Long Lake Dam and Porcupine Bay. Yellow flag has been used medicinally. The roots have been used for several ailments, but **all** parts of the plant can also cause vomiting and diarrhea. Flowers have been used to make yellow dye, and the roots a black dye. It will sicken livestock if ingested, and is generally



Yellow flag iris has showy yellow flowers.

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Yellow flag iris grows tightly bunched along waterways.

## Historical Significance

The **fleur-de-lis** is a stylized design of an iris flower. **Fleur-de-lis** is literally translated from French as “flower of the lily”, and is widely thought to be a stylized version of *Iris pseudocorus*. While it appears on countless European coats of arms and flags over the centuries, the **fleur-de-lis** is particularly associated with the French monarchy. It is often linked with old French settlements like Louisiana or Quebec.



Yellow flag iris growing along Lake Roosevelt

## Biology and ecology

- Perennial forb forming dense stands of robust plants.
- Stout **rhizomes**, 2.5-10in. in diameter; **roots** 2-6ft long.
- **Leaves** erect with upper part arching; leaves flattened, arising in a fan from the soil; raised midrib, sword-like, fine-pointed; 3-4 ft in height.
- **Flowers** on erect stalks (peduncles) 3-4 ft in height; bisexual; large, showy, pale to deep yellow; the only yellow iris in U.S.; several flowers on each stem.
- Fruit a capsule (seed pod); large (to 4 in.), glossy green; many flattened brown seeds.

Yellow Flag can grow up to 4 feet in height and sometimes taller in perfect conditions.



Yellow Flag grown under drier conditions is smaller.



Yellow flag  
*Iris pseudocorus*  
Photo by A. Murray  
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Lincoln County Noxious  
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Yellow flag is the **only** yellow iris found in Washington's wetlands.



Seed pods dry and split into 3

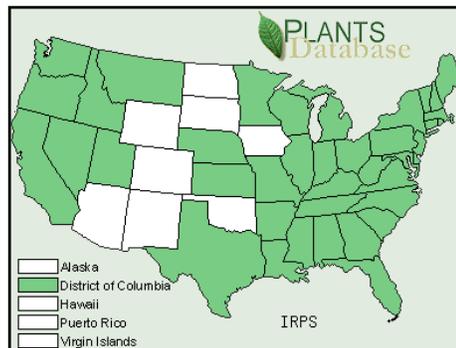
Seed pods commonly produce 20-30 seeds/pod.

Lincoln County Noxious Weed Control Board  
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## Control Measures

- **Prevention:** Learn to identify plants; know your property.
- **Biological:** None known at this time.
- **Cultural:** Competitive vegetation helps prevent infestation, but it doesn't stop it entirely
- **Mechanical:** Not effective!
- **Chemical:** Fall treatment shows a little better control than spring (87% Spring to 97% Fall. Both times are effective.
- **Aquamaster and/or Habitat** alone or together work well.
- Be sure to include a **surfactant** to get maximum product penetration.
- **Mulch materials:** 4 different materials have been used (clear plastic, Black plastic, Tarp (woven plastic), landscape fabric). Percentage of control after 1 year are: Clear plastic 85%, Black plastic 70%, **Tarp (woven plastic) 99%**, landscape fabric 95%.

Yellow flag iris tolerates high soil acidity, occurs from pH 3.6 to pH 7.7. It has a high nitrogen requirement. Can withstand long periods of anoxia (low soil oxygen). Yellow flag iris grows in salt marshes in Scotland. Yellow flag is adapted to receive two kinds of insect visitors, the Bumble Bee and the Honey Bee and also the long-tongued Hover-Fly which pollinate the plants.



Close-up of flower



Yellow flag iris, especially when not in bloom, might be confused with native irises or cattails



Yellow flag iris is a fast-growing and fast-spreading invasive plant that can out compete other wetland plants.

Photos and information courtesy of : Floridata.com, Botanical.com, Invasive plants of the U.S, Wikipedia, Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board and the USDA Plants Database, Dr. Tim Miller-WSU Mount Vernon NWREC and Non-native aquatic plants in the U.S.