

## ENVIRONMENTALLY HARMFUL WETLAND PLANTS OF CONCERN IN NORTHERN WI

Prepared by Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Department, spring 2014



### Flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*)

**When to look:** Mid to late summer in shallow water when the plants are in bloom. Throughout the aquatic growing season in deeper water as blossoms will not form.

**Where to look:** Wetlands, lakeshores, slow-moving rivers, and in water up to 10 feet deep.

**Key features:** A rhizomatous perennial aquatic plant capable of growing as an emergent in shallow water or submersed in water up to 10 feet deep. Leaves are thin, linear, pointed, 3 feet long or more, untoothed, parallel veined, twisted, triangular in cross-section and arise in two rows along the rhizome/base. When in deep water the leaves are limp and floating, reaching the surface where they move with the water, and the plant does not bloom. When in shallow water the leaves stand erect above the water, resembling bulrushes, and the plant blooms. Flowers grow on tall, cylindrical stalks in round-topped umbrella-like clusters of 20-50 flowers having three large pink petals. The three sepals under the petals are also pink and look like small petals, thus the flower is sometimes described as having six pink petals. Bulbils (little bulb-like plant sprouts) may be present at the base of flower stalks and at the roots. Bulbils released from the plants can float freely to start new plants elsewhere. Rhizomes are fleshy and grow trailing along the ground.

#### Sources for additional information:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives/fact/floweringrush.html>

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsAndPlants/noxious-weeds/weed-identification/flowering-rush.aspx>

<http://www.issg.org/database/species/ecology.asp?si=610&>

[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_PLANTMATERIALS/publications/mtpmstn10617.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_PLANTMATERIALS/publications/mtpmstn10617.pdf)

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### Garden loosestrife (*Lysimachia vulgaris*)

Also known as yellow loosestrife, willowweed and willowwort

**When to look:** When blooming during late summer, approximately July to September

**Where to look:** Moist habitats such as fens, wet woods, wetlands, riparian areas, lakeshores, stream banks, ditches

**Key features:** Erect rhizomatous (stoloniferous) perennial attaining a height of 3 to 5 feet or more. Stems and leaves are softly hairy. Leaves are 3 to 5 inches long and egg-shaped, usually growing 3 leaves in a whorl. Showy, bright yellow flowers grow in clusters near the top of the plant. Flowers have 5 petals joined at the base and sometimes have a red or orange eye. Base of the flowers is ringed by green sepals with orange-brown edges. Roots form creeping stems that are partly or entirely underground. Rhizomes can be up to 15 feet long. Once established, is highly competitive and able to spread aggressively by seeds and rhizomes into stands of established vegetation. Able to out-compete cattails and purple loosestrife.

#### Sources for additional information:

<http://luirig.altervista.org/photos-search/index2.php?rcn=17966>

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsAndPlants/noxious-weeds/weed-identification/garden>

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/plants/weeds/GardenLoosestrife.html>

<http://piercecounityweedboard.wsu.edu/gardenloosestrife>

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### **Giant common reed grass (*Phragmites australis*)**

Also known as common reed grass, ditch reed, giant reed

**When to look:** Year round as dead brown leaves from previous growing season remain standing throughout winters. Spring prompts new growth of leaves and summer flowers.

**Where to look:** Freshwater marshes, river edges, shores of lakes and ponds, roadsides, disturbed areas.

**Key features:** Phragmites is a tall perennial grass. The non-invasive strain native to WI is typically found in small, low density populations whereas the non-native, invasive phragmites forms large, tall, dense stands attaining a height of 10 - 15 feet or more including both live stems and standing dead stems from the previous growing season. Stems are round and hollow growing from stout, creeping rhizomes. Leaves are light green in early summer turning to light brown in fall, flat, 1-1.5 inches wide at their widest point, elongate, tapered to a point and attached to the stem by smooth sheaths. Flowers, grouped into spikelets borne on highly branching purple inflorescences, form bushy panicles in mid to late summer and are usually purple or golden in color. As seeds mature, the panicles begin to look "fluffy" and take on a grey sheen due to the hairs on the seeds. Roots form dense networks of rhizomes several feet deep. Plant spreads horizontally by sending out rhizome runners which can grow 10 or more feet in a single growing season.

#### **Sources for additional information:**

<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives/fact/phragmites.html>

[http://www.great-lakes.net/envt/flora-fauna/invasive/pdf/phragmites\\_glc\\_factsheet\\_2011.pdf](http://www.great-lakes.net/envt/flora-fauna/invasive/pdf/phragmites_glc_factsheet_2011.pdf)

<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/pdf/phau1.pdf>

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### **Yellow iris (*Iris pseudacorus*)**

Also known as yellow flag iris, Yellow iris and Water flag

**When to look:** Short flowering season, late spring to early summer

**Where to look:** Wetlands, along streambanks and shorelines and in water up to 10-12 inches deep

**Key features:** Herbaceous flowering perennial attaining a height of 3 to 6 feet in dense stands of robust plants. Erect sword shaped leaves up to 3 feet long and 1.5 inches wide are easily confused with cattails when plant is not blooming. Leaves are folded and clasp the stem at the base in a fan-like fashion. Flowers are especially showy, bright yellow and 3 to 4 inches across, with a darker yellow zone and brown or violet veining on each fall. Flowers give way to large, glossy green, triangular shaped seed pods. Grows best in very wet conditions where it tolerates submersion, low pH, and anoxic soils. Spreads quickly by both rhizome and water-dispersed seed. While primarily an aquatic plant, the rhizomes can survive prolonged dry conditions. Can create dense, monotypic stands, outcompeting native plants. All parts of plant are poisonous, especially the rhizomes, resulting in lowered wildlife food sources in areas where it dominates.

**Sources for additional information:**

<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/fact/YellowFlagIris.html>

<http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/node/205>

[http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive\\_plants/weeds/yellow-iris.pdf](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive_plants/weeds/yellow-iris.pdf)

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsAndPlants/noxious-weeds/weed-identification/yellow-iris.aspx>