

TACKLING Yellow Flag Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*)

Invasive species have significant impacts on the environment, human health, infrastructure and the economy in the Metro Vancouver region.

Yellow flag iris was introduced to North America in the early 1900s from Eurasia as an ornamental aquatic plant. It has escaped into natural areas across the continent and is found throughout the Metro Vancouver region. Unfortunately, many garden centres still sell this plant.

IMPACTS

Yellow flag iris spreads rapidly by roots and floating seeds in ponds, canals, ditches, marshes, and shorelines. It crowds out native wetland plants, reducing habitat for birds, fish, and amphibians. Dense patches trap sediments and slow water flow, causing waterbodies to dry out. **Yellow flag iris can cause skin irritation and blisters if touched.** Provincial regulations require land owners to control this plant.

IDENTIFICATION

Yellow flag iris is easily identified when it is in bloom, as no other entirely yellow-flowered irises grow in North America. It is difficult to distinguish from other native plants and ornamental irises when it is not flowering.

- **Lifecycle:** Perennial, evergreen plant
- **Stem:** Up to 150 centimetres; one or more stems per plant
- **Leaves:** Green, sword-shaped and narrowing to a point; up to 90 centimetres long and 3 centimetres wide



Leaves



Flowers

CREDIT: ISCMV



Seed pods with seeds

CREDIT: ISCMV

- **Flowers:** Bright yellow; three small upright petals are surrounded by three drooping petal-like parts; 7-10 centimetres wide; 4-12 flowers per stem; bloom from May to June
- **Seeds:** Brown seeds form in capsules that look like small green bananas; seeds have a hard shell and can float

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

To prevent further spread across the region and beyond, it is best not to purchase, trade or grow yellow flag iris. If this plant is already present, it is critical to ensure it does not invade adjacent wetlands and other sensitive ecosystems. Effective invasive plant management typically involves a variety of control methods. The following table summarizes the recommended techniques for controlling yellow flag iris on private property or where permission has been granted by the land owner or manager. **Wear gloves to avoid contact with skin. Work at wetland sites may require permits from provincial or federal authorities and consultation with a qualified environmental professional.**

CONTROL STRATEGY	TECHNIQUES	SUITABLE SITES	NOTES
Manual	Pull or dig up the entire plants including the roots	Individual plants, sites less than 1 square metre, sensitive sites; sites on land or in water	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeated pulling required• Any roots left in the ground may re-sprout• May spread fragments or ripe seeds• Challenging to move and dispose of the heavy plants and soil
	Cut aboveground plants, then cover the site with pond liner or heavy PVC matting	Dense sites with few other plants or other obstacles; sites on land or in water	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expensive• Cover should extend beyond the infestation and be secured at the edges• Cover stays in place 4-12 months
	Cut plants at the base	Aquatic sites with at least 5 centimetres of water year-round	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to suitable sites may be difficult• Adjacent sites on land also need to be controlled

For all control techniques, monitoring is required for several years. Wait for one year after control to see if native plants re-establish. If necessary, restore the area with native or non-invasive plants.

How Can You Help?

- Do not purchase, trade or grow yellow flag iris.
- Control invasive plants and replace them with a non-invasive alternative. Check out growgreenguide.ca for suggestions.
- Do not place invasive plants in your backyard composter as the temperature will not become hot enough to destroy the seeds and roots.
- To reduce the spread of invasive species, dispose of yard waste and soil appropriately. Visit your municipality's website for more information.
- Download the '[Report Invasives BC](#)' app to identify and report invasive species.

For the complete set of best management practices for yellow flag iris, and other key invasive species, visit MetroVancouver.org and search 'Invasive Species'.



Yellow flag iris spread throughout a wetland

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