



# Invasive Plant Atlas of New England

## Catalog of Species Search Results



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## *Eichhornia crassipes*

(Common water-hyacinth  
floating water-hyacinth )

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### COMMON NAME

Common water-hyacinth  
floating water-hyacinth

### FULL SCIENTIFIC NAME

*Eichhornia crassipes* (Mart.) Solms

### FAMILY NAME COMMON

Water-hyacinth family

### FAMILY SCIENTIFIC NAME

Pontederiaceae

### IMAGES



Flower/Habit



Leaves with  
inflated petiole



Habit



Flower close-up

Cross-section of  
petiole

## NOMENCLATURE/SYNONYMS

**Synonyms:** *Eichhornia speciosa* Kunth  
*Piaropus crassipes*(Mart.) Raf.

## DESCRIPTION

### Botanical Glossary

*Eichhornia crassipes* is a free-floating aquatic perennial with feathery, pendant roots. The thick, waxy leaves are arranged in a rosette and can reach 0.9 m (3 ft.) above the surface of the water. The blades of the leaves are orbicular to kidney-shaped and measure 4-12 cm (1.5-4.75 in.) across. One of the most distinctive features of this plant are its greatly inflated petioles which allow it to float on the surface of the water.

This plant flowers in mid-summer in more northern areas. The flowers are arranged in a panicle that can be 4-15 cm (1.5-5.9 in.) long. They are showy and usually lilac in color (though rarely they can be white). The uppermost tepal has a darker purple blotch with a yellow center. The flowers measure 5-7 cm (2-2.75 in.) in diameter. The fruit is a capsule with three cells that contains up to 450 ribbed seeds.

Page References Bailey 199, Crow & Hellquist 312, Fernald 396, Gleason & Cronquist 821, Holmgren 779, Magee & Ahles 317. See reference section below for full citations.

## SIMILAR SPECIES

None.

## REPRODUCTIVE/DISPERSAL MECHANISMS

*Eichhornia crassipes* most often reproduces vegetatively by stolons, which it can do at an extremely rapid rate. It can also reproduce sexually and disperse by seed. Long distance dispersal can occur when seeds or plant fragments are carried by water currents or when fragments attach to boats.

## DISTRIBUTION

*Eichhornia crassipes* is native to the Amazon Basin. It has been reported from five continents and at least 50 countries. In the United States it has been reported from the southern states, north to Virginia and Missouri and west to Arizona, California and Hawaii. There is an unsubstantiated report of it from Long Island as well. This species is not yet known to persist in New England.

## HISTORY OF INTRODUCTION IN NEW ENGLAND

*Eichhornia crassipes* has not yet been reported to be naturalized in New England. There is a report of it being introduced into New Orleans in 1884 at an exposition. It likely spread as a result of its being a popular water garden plant. Every year it is discovered in lakes and ponds in southern New England where it is not known to persist from one growing season to the next.

## HABITATS IN NEW ENGLAND

Aquatic  
Lake or Pond  
Roadside  
Yard or Garden

Although this plant has not yet been reported as naturalized in New England, it is found in lakes and ponds and occasionally in water-filled ditches along roadsides where it is introduced each year.

## THREATS

*Eichhornia crassipes* is considered to be one of the worst weeds in the world. Vegetative reproduction allows it to spread rapidly, with some populations reported to double in 6-18 days. The seeds of this plant are reported to remain viable up to 20 years. Florida spends millions of dollars a year controlling the spread of this weed. It can clog waterways, degrade water quality and eliminate the habitat of certain species of aquatic animals. One acre of this plant can weigh up to 200 tons. Though it does not seem to be able to overwinter in New England at this time, repeated introductions may provide an opportunity for naturalization.

## EARLY WARNING NOTES

*Eichhornia crassipes* is not yet reported to persist in New England. Any sightings of this plant should be reported immediately.

## MANAGEMENT LINKS

[The Nature Conservancy](#)

[Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants, University of Florida](#)

USDA-ARS

Washington State Department of Ecology

**DOCUMENTATION NEEDS**

Documentation required: Photograph of plant from wild occurrences

Best time for documentation: Late spring to fall (before frost)

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Integrated Taxonomic Information System

Taxonomic information about the species

PLANTS Database

General information and map

Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants, University of Florida

Extensive information including description, photographs and control information

The Nature Conservancy

Extensive descriptive and control information

Global Invasive Species Database

Information about this plant worldwide

Invasivespecies.gov

Additional links on water-hyacinth

Invasive.org

Additional images of water-hyacinth

USDA-ARS

Information on biocontrol of water-hyacinth

Washington State Department of Ecology

Descriptive and ecological information on this plant

Western Aquatic Plant Management Society

Descriptive information

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## DATA RETRIEVAL

Select a task by clicking the radio button and then click "Submit Selection."

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 Export as comma-delimited text file

## MAPS OF PLANT DISTRIBUTION IN NEW ENGLAND

Select a study area by clicking the radio button and then click 'Selection.'

- The whole New England area
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