

# Yellow Flag Iris

*Iris pseudacorus*

**Progressive Control Plant under the  
West Coast Regional Pest Plant  
Management Strategy**



## National Pest Plant Accord Status

Yellow Flag Iris is listed in the 2008 National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) and is banned from sale, propagation and distribution in New Zealand. For more information refer to the MAF Biosecurity New Zealand website at [www.biosecurity.govt.nz/nppa](http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/nppa)

## Where has it come from?

Yellow Flag Iris is native to Europe, West Asia and parts of North America and was introduced to New Zealand as a garden plant. It was first recorded as growing wild in the Hutt Valley in 1938 and has since spread to many other parts of New Zealand. Yellow Flag Iris has a preference for growing in wet places so the potential for increased infestation on the West Coast is high without control measures being put in place.



Top right: Yellow Flag Iris in flower [CCC]

Above: Yellow Flag Iris flower detail [AC]

## What does Yellow Flag Iris look like?

Yellow Flag Iris is a robust, leafy perennial which grows well in the swampy habitats found around lagoons and estuaries. The plant grows from a thick creeping rhizome which is brownish on the outside with many rootlets. Broad, flat, sword-shaped leaves emerge from a reddish base to form fans up to 1.5m high. After 1-2 years the fans begin producing yellow flowers, similar to the common garden iris, and up to 120mm in diameter.

Flowering continues through the spring months (September to December) followed by the formation of seed capsules containing up to 200 brown, 'corky' seeds per plant. Seeds can be spread short distances by wind, but are more often dispersed by water movement. The plant can also spread vegetatively through the rhizomes creeping outwards to spread over waterways. Pieces of rhizome broken off by floods, stock, machinery or boats can then float away to take root elsewhere.

## Why is Yellow Flag Iris a Pest Plant?

Yellow Flag Iris has been deemed a pest plant because of its very invasive habit. The dense floating mats of vegetation can exclude native plants and block waterways, hindering boating access and recreational activities such as swimming and fishing, and increasing flood potential by trapping silt.

Yellow Flag Iris is also toxic: plant resins can cause skin irritation in humans and stock will sicken if plants are ingested. Herbivores generally avoid grazing Yellow Flag Iris so stock grazing is not a control option.

## What are the best methods of control?

### **Manual Methods**

Small areas of Yellow Flag Iris can be controlled by digging out all parts of the plant, taking particular care to get all parts of the rhizomes, and disposing of to lined landfill. If the plants have flowered, remove any seedheads before commencing digging. Followup procedures will probably be necessary before the area can be planted with other, preferred species.

***NOTE:** As handling Yellow Flag Iris foliage can cause skin irritation in humans, wear gloves and adequate clothing if carrying out manual control work.*

### **Herbicide Methods**

The only way to control large areas of Yellow Flag Iris is to spray it. Do this over a dry period if possible to lessen problems of spraying near water. Consider spraying from a boat onto the land if this is going to be an issue.

If working near, or over water, Glyphosate based products (Roundup, Robust, Agpro Glyphosate 360 etc) are the preferred option but Metsulfuron Methyl based products (Escort, Agronica, Eradicate 600, MET600 etc) generally work better, working slowly down through the plant and into the rhizomes. Ask a Weed-busters Co-ordinator for more advice if you are unsure which herbicide to use as you may need a Resource Consent to spray over water.

Optimum results can be gained by using Metsulfuron Methyl at 5 grams per 10 litres of water sprayed onto the foliage. Follow-up controls will be needed as Yellow Flag Iris is difficult to eradicate.

**For personal safety please use all herbicides as per manufacturer's labelling**

### **Biocontrols**

There are no known biocontrols for Yellow Flag Iris at present.

## Where can I get more help?

For further information call either of the Regional Weedbusters Co-ordinators. They are:

**Mary Trayes:** Environmental Information Officer, West Coast Regional Council (768 0466 or 0508 800 118)

**Tom Belton:** Technical Support Officer Biosecurity & Weeds, Department of Conservation, West Coast - Tai Poutini Conservancy, Hokitika (03 756 9100)



[www.weedbusters.org.nz](http://www.weedbusters.org.nz)

*The West Coast Regional Council does not accept liability for any advice given on this sheet regarding application of herbicides for pest plant control. The brand names listed imply neither endorsement of those brands, nor criticism of any other brands not listed.*