

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS PLANT?



NSW Agriculture

Weed Alert

Hygrophila

Hygrophila costata
A new invasive semi-aquatic weed in NSW



Hygrophila leaves are opposite and can be 18 cm long. (photo - P Gorham)

■ WORLD STATUS

Hygrophila costata is native to the Americas from southern Mexico to Argentina and has naturalised in many tropical and subtropical areas around the world.

It is listed as a noxious weed in North Carolina.

This weed has had a number of names including *Hygrophila brasiliensis*, *Hygrophila guianensis*, *Hygrophila conferta*, *Hygrophila rivularis* and *Ruellia brasiliensis*.

In Australia *Hygrophila costata* has naturalised and become weedy in south-eastern Queensland and north-eastern New South Wales (NSW). In NSW this species has naturalised in a wetland near Casino, along Byron Creek downstream of

Bangalow and along Burringbar Creek at Mooball.

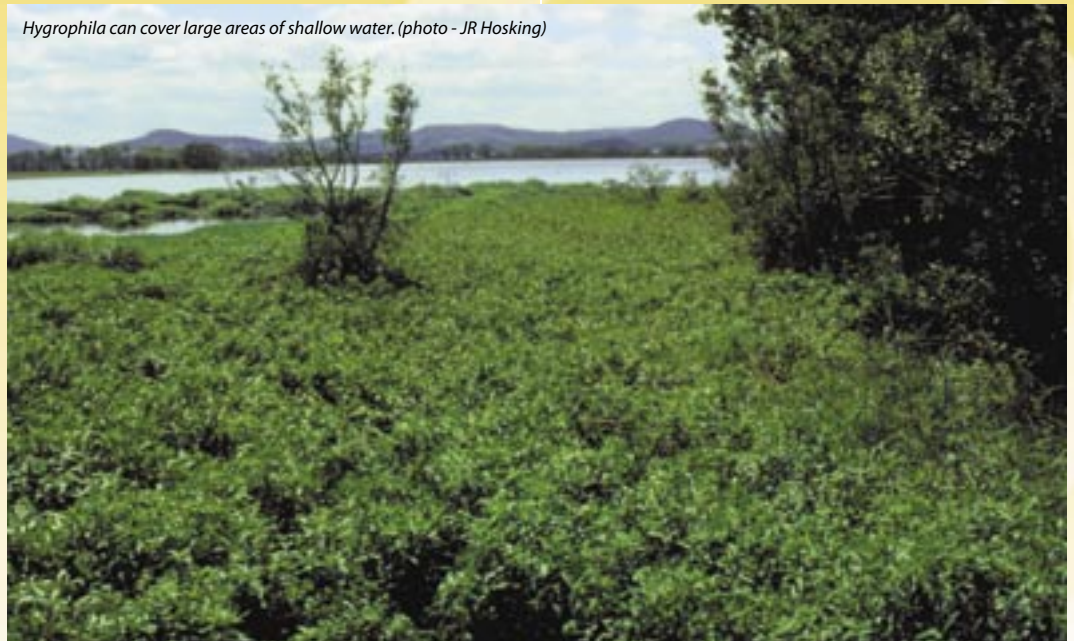
In Queensland the species is a problem in Lake McDonald near Cooroy and along the Caboolture River near Caboolture and has also been recorded from Beaudesert, Beenleigh and the Gold Coast.

Hygrophila costata has only been collected in Australia since the 1990s suggesting that this species is a recent naturalisation.

■ QUARANTINE

All species of *Hygrophila* are prohibited plant imports by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service and cannot be imported into Australia without a pest risk analysis being undertaken.

Hygrophila can cover large areas of shallow water. (photo - JR Hosking)



Visit our website: www.agric.nsw.gov.au/weeds



NSW Agriculture

FOR MORE
INFORMATION:

Contact your local
council weeds officer
or district agronomist,
or telephone the
NSW Agriculture Hotline
on 1800 680 244.

■ THE PROBLEM

Hygrophila costata is an aggressive semi-aquatic herb, especially in shallow water, forming mats of dense growth around the margins of freshwater lakes and watercourses where it can dominate and out-compete more desirable vegetation. Dense infestations are likely to displace native flora and fauna by destroying their natural habitat, and may interfere with recreational activities.

■ IDENTIFICATION

Hygrophila costata is a mat-forming herb to 1.5 m high and is often the dominant species where it is growing.

Leaves and Stems - Leaves are up to 18 cm long and to 3 cm wide, occur in opposite pairs and taper to the base. They have prominent veins and a distinct midrib. Upper stems are 4-angled, erect and rarely branched; lower stems are prostrate and root at nodes.

Flowers - Flowers have white petals and are about 10 mm long. They occur in whorls just above the junction between opposite leaves and the stem.

Fruit and Seeds - Capsules are about 7 mm long and spindle-shaped. Seeds are pale brown, flattened, round, about 0.3 mm wide and become sticky when wet.

■ DISPERSAL

Mostly spread by water-dispersed seed and sections of plants. Sticky seeds may also adhere to wildlife, machinery, watercraft and people causing further spread. Spreading stems sprout new roots from nodes when in contact with the soil.

Peter Gorham, Regional Coordinator (Weeds)

Dr. John Hosking, NSW Agriculture

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Watch out for and report *Hygrophila costata*:

This aggressive semi-aquatic weed was probably introduced into Australia as an aquarium plant in the 1990s and has become a major threat to aquatic environments.



Flowers are white in whorls at leaf junctions and upper stems are 4 angled.
(photo - JR Hosking)



The weed can dominate the edges of waterways. (photo - P Gorham)