



NEWS

GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
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GBRA ALERTS PUBLIC TO NUISANCE AQUATIC PLANT THREAT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SEGUIN, TX – October 13, 1999. Officials at the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority are asking the public to be on the lookout for a nuisance aquatic plant that recently appeared in Texas and poses a serious threat to the state's waterways.

"We're hoping to prevent the introduction and spread of Giant Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) in the Guadalupe River Basin" said Debbie Magin, GBRA director of water quality. "This plant would have a greater negative impact than hydrilla and has the potential to create major environmental and economic havoc wherever it becomes established."

Giant Salvinia is an attractive South American water fern that was adopted by the plant industry for use in aquariums and water gardens. However, the plant quickly chokes off its environment because of its ability to double in size every 3 to 5 days. Giant Salvinia spreads aggressively, floating and moving with the wind, to form mats that shade and crowd out important native plants, reduce oxygen content and degrade water quality. In some parts of Africa and India, the infestation is so severe that entire lakes are covered to a thickness of several feet!

In 1998, the plant was spotted on the 185,000 acre Toledo Bend reservoir, as well as on Cow Bayou in Orange County and in parts of Harris County near Houston. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department immediately began an aggressive treatment program in these areas using the environmentally approved herbicide, Reward. Crews from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries conducted similar chemical treatments on the Louisiana side of Toledo Bend.

This summer, Giant Salvinia was found in Lake Texana, when plants used to create duck habitat for a private individual's pond were carried into the lake by local flooding. Lake Texana is in the Lavaca-Navidad River Basin – and joins the Guadalupe River Basin to the north and east. "This brings the problem much closer to home," said Magin "and increases the likelihood that salvinia may spread into this basin. We're trying to educate the public about the devastating effect this plant could have on the entire area."

(more)

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Salvinia can be accidentally introduced to new waterways from boat propellers, trailers and other water equipment, as well as by floating through creeks and streams. Parks and Wildlife officials stress that although attractive in a water garden or fish tank, Giant Salvinia is a federally-prohibited weed. Possession, purchase or sale constitutes a Class B misdemeanor under Parks and Wildlife Code and carries a fine of between \$200 and \$2,000, confinement in jail for up to 180 days, or both.

Proper disposal for salvinia already growing in water gardens or aquariums would be to place the plant in an area without water and let it dry completely, or treat with a plant killer. Under no circumstances should this plant be released into any Texas waters.

Giant Salvinia is easily identified by its bright to dark green folded 'chains' of oblong floating leaves that measure one-half to one-and-one half inches across. A picture of Giant Salvinia can be found on the Internet at <http://www.toledobend.com/alliance/docs/salvinia.html>.

"It is absolutely critical that we stop Giant Salvinia from establishing a foothold in the Guadalupe River Basin," said Magin. "We are asking the public to help us protect their water resources by immediately reporting possible salvinia sightings in area waterways to GBRA at (830) 379-5822, or by sending email to dmagin@gbra.org."