

Yellow Flag Iris

Iris pseudacorus



What are invasive species?

Invasive species are species that are introduced to an area outside of their native range. They can be introduced intentionally or unintentionally.

Why are invasive species a problem?

Once they establish, invasive plants can reproduce quickly because they have no natural predators or pathogens to keep them in check, and they often become the dominant species in an ecosystem. This can have devastating effects on the environment. Invasive species can displace native plants by monopolizing space, light, water and other resources needed for growth. They can completely alter native plant communities and drastically lower biodiversity. Invasive species can also adversely affect the economy and human health, and interfere with recreational activities.

HISTORY

Yellow flag iris originated in Europe, Western Asia, and Northwest Africa. It was introduced to North America in the early 1900s as an ornamental garden flower. It has since spread throughout Canada and the U.S., and can be found in several ponds and streams across Prince Edward Island.

IDENTIFICATION

Positively identifying yellow flag iris can be difficult, especially when it is not in bloom. Here are some distinguishing features to look for:

- More robust than native iris species
- Leaves are sword-shaped, 0.5-1.5m long, 1-3cm wide, and have a raised ridge in the middle of the leaf
- Large yellow flower with 3 petals facing up and 3 petals hanging down



- Brown-purple stripes on petals
- Blooms June to August
- Flowers yield seed pods that resemble small, green, bananas
- Forms large clumps
- Extensive root system

CONCERN

When yellow flag iris establishes in an area, it forms large clumps. These clumps can have a profound effect on the surrounding environment. They can alter the width of waterways and sometimes even block small streams. They can also cause soil compaction and trap sediments. Yellow flag iris can also affect human health, because its tissues contain a resin that can cause skin irritation in humans.



HABITAT

Yellow flag iris prefers full sun or partial shade. It is often found in grasslands, meadows, disturbed areas, urban areas, gardens, and freshwater wetlands.



CONTROL

Physical removal is favored over chemical and biological controls because the latter two often create unintended ecological consequences. However, physical removal can be labor intensive. For physical removal to be effective, as much of the root system as possible needs to be removed because even small pieces left in the soil can produce a new plant. Caution should be taken when removing Yellow Flag Iris to protect skin from the irritating resin in the plant tissues. Plants removed from a site should be transported in plastic bags to a waste management facility for incineration. In addition, it is important that native species be planted where invasive species were removed to prevent future invasions.

GARDEN ALTERNATIVES

Harlequin blue flag iris (*Iris versicolor*) is native to PEI. It shares the same distinct iris-type flower and sword-shaped leaves as yellow flag. Harlequin blue flag's blooms are a brilliant blue-purple and often have a spot of yellow on the petals. They bloom May-July. Harlequin blue flag prefers full sun but will tolerate some shade, and grows well in gardens, meadows, riparian areas, swamps, and marshes.



Beach-head iris (*Iris setosa* var. *canadensis*) is native to PEI. This species shares the same distinct iris-type flower as yellow flag. However, beach-head iris blooms are blue and are much smaller than yellow flag. The flowers bloom June-July. Beach-head iris grows well in areas exposed to salt water.

Yellow marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*) is native to PEI. This species is physically much different than yellow flag iris. However, both exhibit brilliant yellow flowers and grow in similar locations. Yellow marsh marigold forms mounds and can be 15-30cm tall. Their yellow flowers bloom April-July. They grow well in sun and partial shade, and thrive in moist soils, riparian zones, marshes, and ditches.



How can you help?

Here are a few things you can do to help stop the introduction and spread of alien invasive species:

- Learn more about invasive species in PEI, including how to identify species of concern
- Choose native species whenever possible
- Carefully inspect and clean clothing, gear, animals, and vehicles before visiting a new natural area
- Never dump garden or pond waste in a natural area.
- When disposing of invasives, they should be placed in a clear or dark plastic bag and taken to Island Waste Management for incineration
- Report a sighting

How to report:

If you think you have seen this invasive alien species on Prince Edward Island, please report your sighting to us by phone or e-mail

Phone: (902) 892-7513

Email: peiinvasives@gmail.com

www.peiinvasives.com



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