

Frequently Asked Questions: Invasive Lily Eradication Efforts

Question: Does clipping invasive lilies really reduce their abundance in a waterbody?

Answer: Yes, but to be most effective –

- the effort should be undertaken on a large scale so that existing invasive lilies do not serve as a source population;
- there needs to be a long-term commitment (at least 5 years, but maybe more); and
- clipping needs to be undertaken carefully, to avoid unintentionally increasing the spread of the plant;¹
- the clipping needs to take place at least twice annually (1) shortly after initial leafing (to reduce plant to photosynthesis); and (2) after plants have flowered.

Question: Will clipping eliminate the invasive lily population?

Answer: Over time, with the proper protocols (see above), the invasive lily population can be significantly reduced. However, to get to full elimination, ongoing maintenance operations will likely be needed for a decade or more.

Question: Why not use herbicides instead?

Answer: Herbicides can be effective, in some instances, in reducing populations in areas that are treated. However, the use of herbicides also raises numerous concerns, including but not limited to:

- herbicide use may have unintended, adverse consequences, including
 - impacts to aquatic species including reproductive, neurologic and other impacts;
 - impacts to species up the food chain as waterfowl and raptors consume fish with bio-accumulated concentrations of toxins in fatty tissue;
 - impacts to lakebeds as areas are essentially sterilized of life (the presence of native aquatic plants is important to the survival of many fish species);
 - hybridization with native species, which makes future management virtually untenable and may reduce the resiliency of the native species over time (i.e. Sanders County Eurasian water milfoil hybridization post chemical application); and
 - Many chemicals, despite testing, are found to have adverse impacts post application (i.e. Roundup example). CRC applies the precautionary principle when supporting on-the-ground management options.

Question: Has this been done successfully elsewhere?

¹ If clipping/pulling is not undertaken in a careful fashion, increased growth of the plant may result.

Answer: A few individuals on Seeley Lake² have been manually treating lilies with some success but has not asked others to actively participate. The Forest Service is also engaging in similar invasive lily reduction efforts elsewhere in Montana, for instance at Holland Lake. Bottom barriers and deploying divers to hand pull plants has been successful in areas with small infestations and can be used for maintenance operations long term.

Question: What are the benefits of clipping invasive lilies?

Answer: Numerous benefits, include but are not limited to:

- Reduces habitat for predaceous, nonnative fish;
- Can assist in restoring native plant species diversity (with benefits to species up the food chain);
- Improve recreational opportunities as boats are not impeded with invasive water lilies;
- Increase in public safety (as water lilies can cause the accidental drowning of swimmers);
- Reduction in mosquito habitat; and
- Reduction in algae growth/improved water quality.

Question: Why should I participate?

Answer: Like with the Northern Pike, it demonstrates our community stewardship commitment to preserve the aquatic integrity of Placid Lake, our part of the Clearwater Lakes ecosystem.

Question: Will CRC host this event next year?

Answer: Our goal is to host this event twice next year, but that will depend in part upon the response from the community and our ability to obtain funding to support the event.

References:

<https://kingcounty.gov/services/environment/animals-and-plants/noxious-weeds/weed-identification/fragrant-water-lily.aspx>

<https://www.nwcb.wa.gov/weeds/fragrant-water-lily>

² Karen Linford, a Seeley Lake resident and former Forest Service employee, has been successfully treating her lake shore property over the last five years.