

Please call 1-866-invader if you suspect you have found this species

South American spongeplant
Limnobium laevigatum

Other common names: West Indian spongeplant

USDA symbol: LILA7
ODA rating: A



Introduction: Spongeplant is a perennial, freshwater herb that form dense mats in still to slow-moving waters. Spongeplant is often found free-floating, but may also root lightly in shallow margins of canals or marshes. It has shown the capacity to completely canopy water bodies in a short time frame. Because it overwinters by seed, it may have the potential to survive Oregon winters intact. Spongeplant is available widely through retail nurseries, online pond and aquarium vendors and hobby trading websites.

Distribution: No infestations have been identified in Oregon. It is expanding in the Sacramento River delta and may be transported to Oregon by waterfowl.

Description: Spongeplants typically form floating mats of vegetation, but are sometimes lightly rooted in shallow muddy areas; their appearance varies considerably according to their density: in uncrowded growing conditions the leaves float flat along the water and have distinctive aerenchyma tissue on their lower surface. When crowded, spongeplant's petioles lengthen to hold laminae (leaves) 20-30 cm (8-12 in) above the water; these older, crowded spongeplants resemble water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*), but can readily be distinguished by spongeplant's small white flower and the lack of a swollen petiole bases.

Impacts: Substantial biomass of aquatic plants can increase the risk of flooding and increase the cost of water delivery by slowing the passage of water through canals, marshes and streams. Heavy growths are generally confined to non-navigable waterways, but sheltered embayments on lakes or reservoirs could similarly foster problematic populations, thereby reducing access to fishing, boating, swimming or other recreational activities.

Biological controls: There are no biocontrol agents available.

