

A new invader

South American spongeplant: worse than water hyacinth?

It chokes out everything.

Many seeds. Small seedlings move easily.

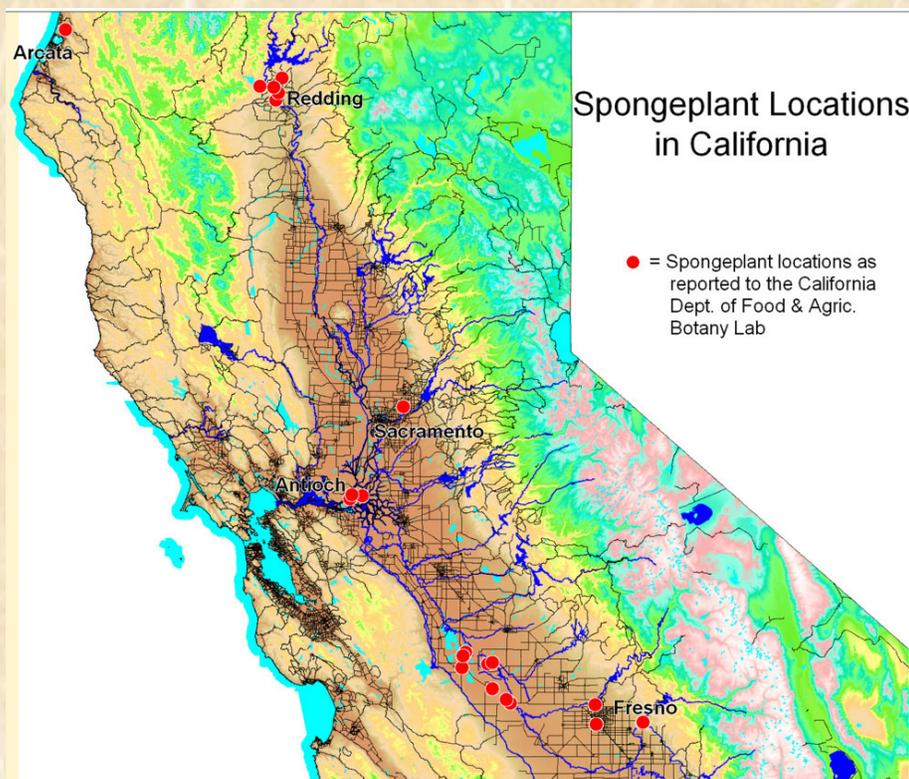


The first California infestation, found in a 5-acre Redding pond in 2003, seen here before treatment. **Spongeplant choked out several other aggressive water weeds**, like water primrose and parrotsfeather.



Spongeplant mixed in with duckweed. The red circles show spongeplant seedlings. **Water hyacinth rarely reproduces from seed, but spongeplant has many seeds and seedlings.** Seeds survive at least three years.

It's really starting to spread.



Spongeplant Locations in California

● = Spongeplant locations as reported to the California Dept. of Food & Agric. Botany Lab

Official state records of spongeplant locations. **The first record of spongeplant was in 1996 in a pond system in the East Bay hills**, but that infestation was eradicated. **In 2003, it appeared in Arcata and Redding, and those two infestations still survive.** No more spongeplant appeared until the summer of 2007, when plants were reported in the San Joaquin River in Fresno. In late December, 2007, it was found a few miles from Antioch in the Sacramento River Delta, but seemed to disappear after a storm. In winter of 2008, plants were found in a canal off the Kings River east of Fresno. In summer, 2008, it appeared in canals in western Fresno County. **In 2009 and 2010, it was again found in the Delta.**

But maybe we can beat it.



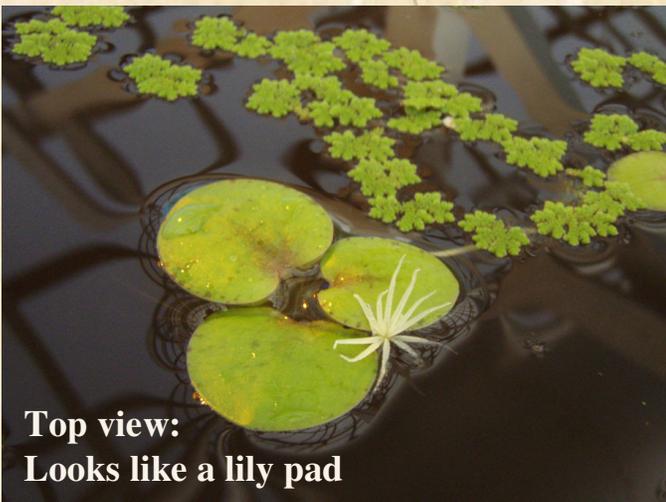
Before treatment



After treatment

Left: Spongeplant in a canal in western Fresno County. **Right:** The same canal two weeks after treatment. Spongeplant spreads easily but it is relatively easy to control, if it hasn't had time to make a lot of seeds.

Learn to spot it!



Top view:
Looks like a lily pad



Side view:
Look for curved bottom of leaf

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Crowded:
Looks like water hyacinth

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Spongeplant has an unusual leaf shape when it's not crowded. Then its leaves lie flat on the water (above, left) and from the side it looks like a **boat's keel** (above, right). In crowded conditions (left), the leaves turn upright, the leaf stems become long, and the leaves thin and expand. In **crowded** conditions, **spongeplant looks like a lot like water hyacinth**, but it's smaller (about 8 to 14 inches tall). The long pale filaments of the star-shaped female flower are easy to see in the photos above.

HELP THE EFFORT!

You can help by reporting finds or having your stream, pond, or canals checked. And thanks.

For more information:

http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/phpps/ipc/hydrilla/hydrilla_hp.htm

To report plants or find out about surveys: Patrick Akers at pakers@cdfa.ca.gov