



Image © Tania Siemens/TNC

OTHER COMMON NAMES: In Britain it is called Segg, the Anglo-Saxon word for “small sword”

DESCRIPTION: It grows 0.4 – 1.5 m tall and has thick, fleshy rhizomes that form dense, horizontal mats. Each rhizome is 1 – 4 cm in diameter and extends vertical roots 10 – 20 cm deep. Stiff, swordlike leaves originate at the base of the stem in a fan-like, overlapping arrangement. Leaves are 50 – 100 cm long by 1 – 3 cm wide, covered with a whitish wax, and have raised mid-ribs. It is the only yellow iris that occurs outside of cultivated areas (for example, wetlands), and its large, yellow flower inflorescences are 8 – 10 cm wide. The three-sided fruit are shiny green and contain three densely packed vertical rows of seeds that are 2 – 5 mm in diameter, pale brown, and disk-shaped.

SIMILAR SPECIES:

When not in flower, American Sedge (*Acorus americanus*) and cattails (*Typha latifolia*) can be mistaken for yellow flag iris.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

- yellow iris flowers
- Leaf blades in overlapping fan arrangement
- Raised mid-ribs

WHEN TO FIND YELLOW FLAG IRIS: Yellow flag iris blooms in April/May in southern Oregon and June/July in northern Oregon.

WHERE TO FIND YELLOW FLAG IRIS: Yellow flag iris is found in nutrient-rich areas with full sun exposure, in wetlands, and along the banks of ponds, lakes and slow-moving rivers.

WHAT TO DO: Remove this plant from your land to prevent further spread and report new populations. Hand pulling/digging is a viable option if populations are small. Workers must protect their hands because the plant sap can irritate the skin. For large populations, cutting followed by herbicide may be more effective. Consult the King County Noxious Weed Program Best Management Practices, <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/lands/weeds/pdf/yellow-flag-iris-control.pdf> for more information on control.

Yellow Flag Iris

Iris pseudacorus

Native to Europe, yellow flag iris was brought to the United States and Canada in the early 1900s as an ornamental plant. Today it can be found throughout most of the U.S. and Canada. In Oregon, yellow flag iris occurs in the Deschutes River basin, along the coast, and in urban areas.

This perennial wetland plant produces large mats of rhizomes and dead leaves that can displace native wetland species. It can dry out wetlands by forming dense horizontal rhizome mats and thatch that compacts soil and elevates the entire topography of the wetland.

Even though yellow flag iris is now listed as an Oregon state noxious weed, it continues to be sold in garden centers and on the internet, and is easily spread by dumped garden clippings or when gardeners trade and share plants. Seeds can float and survive in water for many days.

Once established in creeks and wetlands, spring floods can carry rhizomes and the buoyant seeds downstream into new sites. Many wetlands, including brackish marshes, are susceptible to invasion as this plant tolerates a wide range of soil acidities, water depths, and salinity levels. Yellow flag iris has already invaded many of Oregon’s coastal brackish marshes.

Yellow flag iris should be removed from gardens, water gardens, and natural areas. Along waterways, seeds-heads can be clipped to reduce further spread.

REFERENCES

Weidemer, S., S. Chan. 2008. *On the Lookout for Aquatic Invaders. Identification Guide for the Pacific Northwest.* Oregon Sea Grant Extension. Available to order at: <http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/themes/invasives/index.html>
 Boersma, P.D., S.H. Reichard, A.N. Van Buren. 2006. *Invasive Species of the Pacific Northwest.* University of Washington Press



Fan shaped basal leaf arrangement
Image: Reed Reese Steiner



Comparison of yellow flag and cattail.
Image: Chris McDonald

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