Mexican water lily

Nymphaea mexicana

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Family
Nymphaeaceae (water lily)

Also known as
Mexican lily, banana water lily

Where is it originally from?
Mexico and southern USA

What does it look like?
Bottom-rooted aquatic plant, similar to other water lilies, with vertical underwater rhizomes and round heart-shaped floating leaves (<25cm diameter) on long stalks. Mature leaves have brown blotches on the upper surface and are mainly purple beneath. Fleshy stems (stolons) bear banana-shaped tubers. Star-shaped flowers (15 cm across) are pale-yellow with many veined petals and produce seed (2-3 mm long).

Are there any similar species?
Distinguished from true water lilies by its vertical rhizome and presence of banana-shaped tubers on the fleshy stem. Cleft in the leaf (which creates the heart shape), is greater than 10% of leaf length, and the main vein protrudes on the underside of the leaf.

Why is it weedy?
Grows rapidly, covering infested waterbodies.

How does it spread?
Rhizomes, tubers and seeds are carried by water, and fragments can be spread by boats, fishing gear or machinery, or by planting.

What damage does it do?
Forms dense mats of floating leaves over large areas, clogging waterways, shading out other plants and obstructing recreational water users.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Still freshwater: ponds, still parts of streams.

What can I do to get rid of it?
Contact your regional council to determine the status of this species and responsibility for control and/or advice on control.

Photo: Trevor James

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