

Fighting Invasive Plants

FYi

The growing presence of non-native, invasive plants impacts Florida's native environment and the South Florida Water Management District's (SFWMD) mission. These invasive plants impede SFWMD's ability to provide flood protection to the region's 8.1 million residents by clogging water ways and damaging infrastructure. Other invasive plants negatively impact Florida's native wildlife by altering the environments they depend upon. SFWMD has invested significant resources to control these invasive species to ensure the future health of South Florida's valuable natural resources.

Invasive Species

☐ Melaleuca:

- This fast-growing tree was brought from Australia initially as an ornamental tree and later for erosion control around Lake Okeechobee
- By 1985, at least 500,000 acres statewide were infested with the plant
- The SFWMD and partner agencies have spent more than \$70 million to combat the plant
- These efforts are showing success at managing melaleuca



Melaleuca

☐ Lygodium:

- Also known as "Old World climbing fern," this aggressive vining fern was introduced by nurseries in the early 1950s
- The plant rapidly covers tree canopies and causes them to collapse, smothers native plants and increases the risk of damaging wildfires, destroying critical habitat for native wildlife



Lygodium

☐ Aquatic Weeds:

- Aquatic weeds like hydrilla, water lettuce and hyacinth can clog flood control structures, damage habitat and interfere with navigation



Hyacinth



Brazilian Pepper:

- This tree is known for its red berries. It was introduced to South Florida as an ornamental plant but has since spread to infest more than 700,000 acres throughout SFWMD’s boundaries. It reduces the biodiversity in habitat that is crucial for native wildlife



Brazilian Pepper

Australian Pine:

- This invasive tree has infested more than 200,000 acres in SFWMD’s boundaries from beaches to farmland to the Everglades
- It is a fast-growing large tree, and its mat of falling needles inhibits the growth of many native plant species while reducing the quality of wildlife habitat



Australian Pine

What SFWMD does to control invasive plants

- SFWMD control efforts include prescribed burns, mechanical removal, herbicide application and use of biological controls such as insects and herbivorous fish
- The agency typically spends more than \$20 million each year managing invasive plants. The cost to manage an invasive species increases dramatically the longer it has been established and the further a population expands



Crews are working to eradicate *Lygodium* from the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge in Palm Beach County through a partnership between SFWMD, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

