

Kariba weed

Salvinia molesta

KEY FEATURES



- Kariba weed is a free-floating plant (a fern) that dominates a wide variety of water habitats in its introduced range, including lakes, rivers and rice paddies flood canals, artificial lakes and hydro-electric facilities swamps, drainage channels and along river margins
- Prefers stagnant or slow moving water, often in small bays and inlets of dissected shorelines and tributaries of small streams, where it is protected from wave action
- Plants produce green vegetation on hairy stems that reach up to 30 cm long and 5 cm wide.
- Forms mats 2.5 cm thick (or much thicker, depending on local conditions such as water current, waves, and so on)
- Spread within a system by movement of plants by wind, water currents, floods and animals. Birds and animals that use waterways can spread the weed between waterways. Spread between waterways is assumed to be mainly by people moving plants intentionally (as ornamentals), unintentionally as a hitchhiker on boats, or in shipments of aquatic plants and fish
- Increased transport of commodities in international commerce will increase the movement of Kariba weed around the world

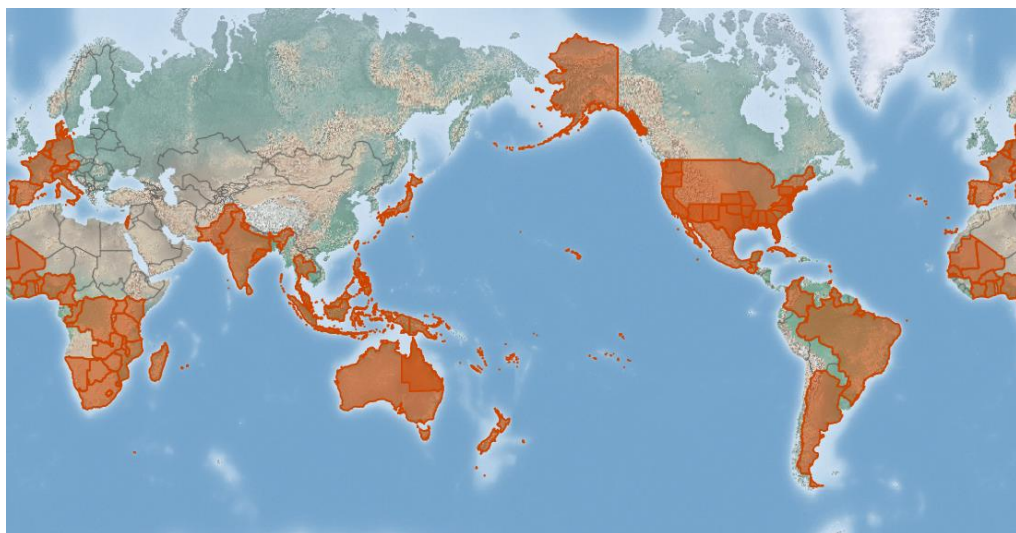


PATHWAYS

✓ water

✓ pet and aquarium trade

Present
(status not
recorded)



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IMPACTS



Environment

Disrupts native ecosystems, reducing natural resilience. Thick mats cut off light and outcompete native plants, and impacts water quality, affecting native plant and fish populations



Health

Dense mats host mosquitoes and snails that can pass on human diseases. Mats prevent the passage of boats and canoes impede transport by water and block access to drinking water by people, domestic stock and wildlife



Society & Culture

Communities that rely on boat transport may be affected by clogging of waterways, limiting access to schools, healthcare and supplies



Economy

Major problem in lowland rice paddies. Drowning of livestock that try to walk on the dense mats. Impacts commercial and recreational fishing by preventing boat access and clog irrigation and drainage canals

DISTRIBUTION

Native range South-eastern Brazil

Introduced range widespread throughout the world in a variety of freshwater habitats

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Based on the environmental, economic and human health impacts ranks a close second behind water hyacinth on a list of the world's most noxious aquatic weeds

INFORMATION SOURCES (click links for more)

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Text and map *Salvinia molesta* (Kariba weed) – CABI <https://www.cabi.org/jsc/datasheet/48447>