



Murrumbidgee  
Irrigation

# Alligator Weed

**Alligator Weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*) is a potentially devastating weed that grows both in water and on land, affecting waterways and floodplain areas. It has extremely vigorous growth and poses a major threat to irrigation systems.**

The potential costs to irrigation farming in the MIA have been estimated to be \$250 million a year if alligator weed growth is uncontrolled.

Early detection is critical, as alligator weed is extremely difficult to control once established. Eradication is possible when infestations are detected early.

## Impacts on irrigation resources

Alligator weed restricts access to water, blocks and damages pumps and other infrastructure. Mats of alligator weed can impede stream flow and lodge against structures, promoting sedimentation which contributes to flooding and structural damage.

## Landholder obligations

Alligator weed is listed as a Weed of National Significance and one of the highest priority weeds for detection and management in NSW. Under the Biosecurity Act 2015 any person who knows the risk posed by a weed has a duty to ensure it is prevented, eliminated or minimised.

Because the MIA is located within specified biosecurity zones for Alligator Weed this means that an owner or occupier of the land within the MIA must notify the weed authority at your local Council of any new infestations as soon as is practical.

The landowner and/or occupier is responsible for eradicating the weed, or if that is not practical, destroy as much of the weed as is practicable and suppress the spread of any remaining weed.

## Plant description

Alligator weed is generally distinguished from other plants by its combination of the following three features:

- Glossy spear-shaped leaves in opposite pairs
- Hollow stems
- Small white papery flowers on short stalks.

As an aquatic plant, alligator weed grows rooted in soil near the water's edge or rooted in substrates beneath the water. Large mats of root, leaf and stem material can extend many metres across the water surface.

Mats exceeding 1m in thickness can break away and become free floating and may become lodged elsewhere and send roots into the substrate or banks.

## Environmental impacts

Alligator weed disrupts aquatic environments by blanketing the surface and impeding the penetration of light. It grows in dense mats across the water which reduces dissolved oxygen and affects aquatic flora and fauna.

## How does it spread

Stems break up naturally or with disturbance, creating fragments capable of forming new plants. Plant fragments can create new infestations when they float downstream or are moved through human activities. The most significant spread between catchments in NSW has been through the commercial and recreational activities of people.

Root storage tissues allow for survival over long dry periods, contributing to the difficult eradication of the plant.



*This is what can happen if Alligator Weed is not controlled.*

## Help stop the spread

Be aware of alligator weed and how it is spread. Check around watercourses, irrigation channels, drains and low-lying areas. Thoroughly clean all machinery that has been near infested areas, including earth moving and channel cleaning equipment, motor vehicles and boats. Avoid moving machinery, boats or vehicles through areas known to be infested with alligator weed. For further information visit <https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Details/7> or [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds/weed-control/management-guides/alligator-weed-control-manual](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds/weed-control/management-guides/alligator-weed-control-manual)

## Who to contact

If you find Alligator Weed growing in our drains or channels, please notify us on (02) 6962 0200, or in any other area contact the weed authority at your local Council.