

# Understanding Your Lake

## “Where Did All These Weeds Come From?”



Aquatic weeds are a fact of life for us here in South Florida. Many of the plant species that plague our waterways are not originally from this country. Most are brought here for the aquarium or water garden markets and are inadvertently released into our lakes and canals by residents. Long warm summers, high nutrient levels and an abundance of sunshine make our waterways an ideal breeding ground. The problem is compounded because these foreign invaders left their natural enemies behind in their native regions. Florida lacks the environmental conditions, diseases, insects, fish, and birds that kept these plants in check back in their home countries. As waterway managers we face several challenges in dealing with these weeds. The E.P.A. has very stringent regulations on what products we are allowed to use in the water which limits the options we have available. Within the small group of herbicides we can use, every one doesn't work on every plant. With new weeds showing up all the time, there is a period of trial and error in order to find the solution to the problem. Some plants have evolved resistance to the products we have, leaving us without an immediate remedy. Certain herbicides require you not to use treated water for irrigation for a set period of time. If a community depends on lake water for irrigation it may prevent us from using a product in that particular lake. Large infestations need to be treated in portions in order to avoid throwing off the oxygen levels in the lake and causing other problems. Just because a lake has not had a problem with weeds in the past does not mean it's immune. Community lakes are not closed systems and are shared by many residents. Problem plants can find their way into lakes from dumped fish tanks, being flushed in with storm water, or even from boats and fishing gear used in other lakes. Wading birds and migratory animals can carry weeds from site to site depositing them in lakes as they go. Allstate Resource Management believes that educated consumers make the best clients. We continue to share our knowledge with homeowners to help them understand the changes that occur in their lakes and our efforts to manage them.