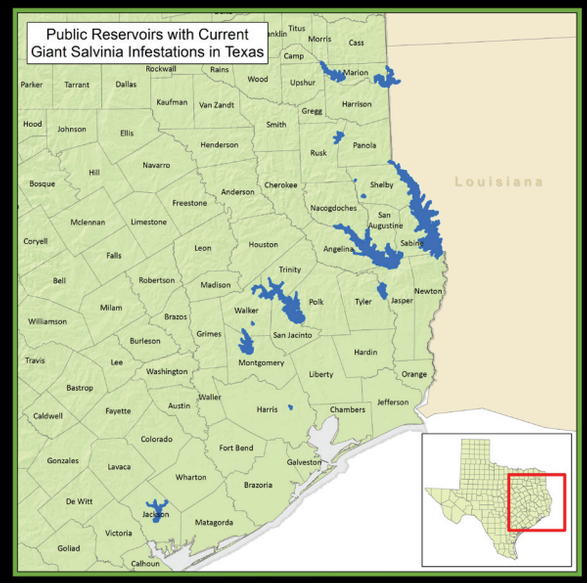
Want to say “Goodbye!” to your pond or lake?

Just let salvinias in and don’t manage the problem.

Then you’ll have a major infestation to deal with.



For information on salvinia control, see cise.tamu.edu/caddo or caddosalvinia.blogspot.com.

For assistance in identifying salvinias and for recommendations for their control, see aquaplant.tamu.edu.

Salvinias are just one of many invasive species in Texas. For more information, see texasinvasives.org.

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EM-109

THE POND DESTROYERS

COMMON AND GIANT SALVINIA

Learn how you can help stop the spread of salvinias

What are salvinias?

Salvinias are non-native, floating aquatic ferns. There are two species of salvinia in Texas, common salvinia (Salvinia minima) and giant salvinia (Salvinia molesta). While giant salvinia has been called the worst or most invasive aquatic plant in the world, common salvinia is also very invasive and problematic. Both salvinias can double in size within a week or less with good summer growing conditions. The salvinias are native to South America and were imported into the United States by the water garden and aquarium industries. Common salvinia was first noted in Texas in 1992 and giant salvinia in 1998. Since then the salvinias have covered tens of thousands of acres of public and private waters in Texas.

Identifying salvinias

Salvinias are relatively small with individual plant leaves from ⅓ to ¾ inches wide for common salvinia and from ½ to 1½ inches wide for giant salvinia. Whole plants are usually 2–8 inches long. Salvinias have a velvety appearance because of the tiny water-repellent hairs that cover the leaf surface. As giant salvinia matures, its leaves fold and compress into chain-like arrangements.

Top: Giant salvinia (note the chain-like appearance)
Bottom: Common salvinia (small leaves and no strong folding)

The problem

New salvinia plants are produced from any small fragment of the stem node, and with their rapid growth they can quickly cover a pond, forming a thick floating mat that prevents sunlight and oxygen from entering the pond.

With no sunlight for other, more beneficial plants to grow and with oxygen from the atmosphere effectively cut-off, the pond water becomes oxygen-depleted, causing loss of habitat for all aquatic plants and animals. Even migrating waterfowl such as ducks and geese do not use ponds covered with salvinias. Nothing eats salvinia, except a few insects. The pond becomes a dead, decaying, lifeless body of water.

The invasion of salvinias

Salvinias get to ponds by travelling on boats and trailers, in bait boxes, and possibly on birds such as herons and egrets, reptiles such as turtles and alligators, and mammals such as nutria and beavers. Salvinias also get into off-channel ponds and can move pond-to-pond during flooding.

The primary mode of salvinia translocation is people moving boats between infested lakes and ponds.

The solution

If our native ecosystems are to be preserved, the spread of salvinias must be stopped and where possible, eradicated.

Cleaning boats, trailers, live wells and bait boxes when leaving a pond or lake infested with salvinia is the first step. Watching for salvinias on ponds and taking action immediately if they are spotted is critical.

Report all infestations to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department: (409) 384-9965 or giantsalvinia@tpwd.state.tx.us.

Salvinias can be eliminated from small ponds by physically removing them or using registered aquatic herbicides properly. Physically removing salvinia and allowing it to dry or composting it completely will kill it. Salvinia can also be managed biologically with the salvinia weevil.