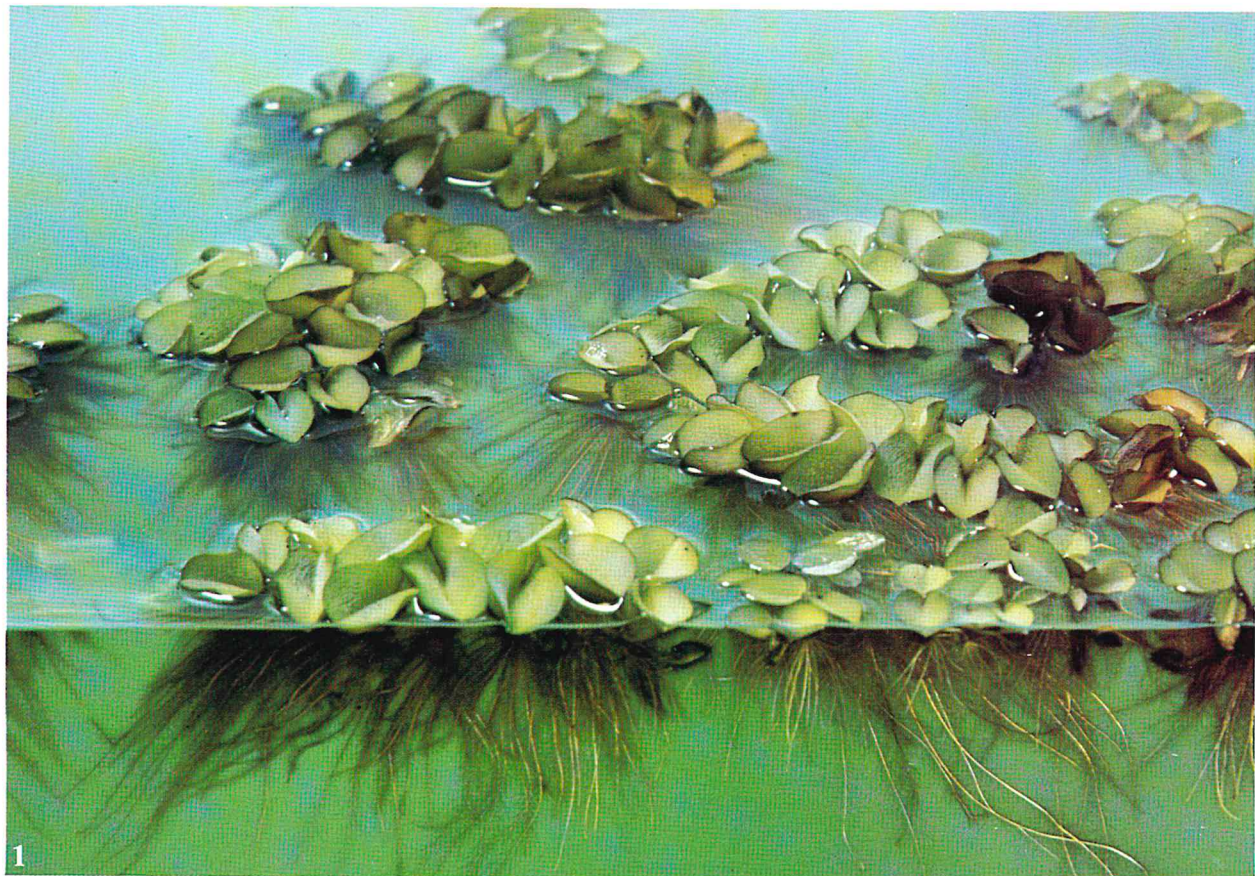


Agriculture Protection Board
Advisory Leaflet No. 38
August 1978
Agdex No. 647
76523/5/78-10M-L/2795

SALVINIA



Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) is an extremely damaging freshwater aquatic weed which could cause havoc to agriculture and the environment if it became firmly established in Western Australia. Salvinia is capable of reproducing at an explosive rate. It prefers still or slow moving water with a high nutrient content. It grows in both tropical and temperate regions. Salvinia will readily form a mat completely covering the water surface. It blocks lakes, dams, drains and irrigation channels. The mass of green material may transpire considerably more water than would be lost by normal surface evaporation. The decaying debris pollutes and de-oxygen-



ates the water, endangering fish and other wildlife. The water becomes unfit for livestock or human use. Infestations of Salvinia often make wetland areas useless as retreats for native water fowl. Salvinia was probably introduced to Australia from tropical America, via Asia, as an aquarium plant. Small infestations have been found in some wetland areas in Western Australia. Salvinia is sometimes used here in aquariums, but this is illegal, because it is a declared plant (noxious weed) throughout Western Australia. All plants of Salvinia must be destroyed.

1 Salvinia—young and old plants (nearly life-size) 2 A swamp choked with Salvinia.

(continued overleaf)

SALVINIA

(continued)

Description:

Salvinia is a free floating aquatic fern. The leaves are oval, about 2.5 cm in diameter. As the leaves multiply they become closely folded, giving the plant a characteristic appearance. The upper surface of the leaves is covered with numerous white waxy hairs, which readily shed water and help provide the plants' buoyancy. Salvinia has no true roots. Fine leaves that look like roots hang into the

water and absorb nutrients.

Being a fern, Salvinia has no seeds. At certain times of the year spore-bearing branches may form between the root-like leaves, but the spores are not fertile.

The plant propagates itself solely by vegetative means. New plants are formed by division of the original one. Clumps of the weed then easily break up to form new infestations. Under ideal conditions, the number of plants can double every ten days.

The major means of dispersal and the one which has been hardest to

control is human encouragement of the plant. Most new infestations can be traced to pieces of Salvinia either discarded from fish ponds or deliberately planted in misguided attempts to beautify waterways.

Prompt action is essential to eradicate isolated patches of Salvinia, to prevent the weed getting established in a new area.

Suspect plants should be reported to the Agriculture Protection Board, telephone Perth 367 0111 or any country office of the Agriculture Protection Board or Department of Agriculture.