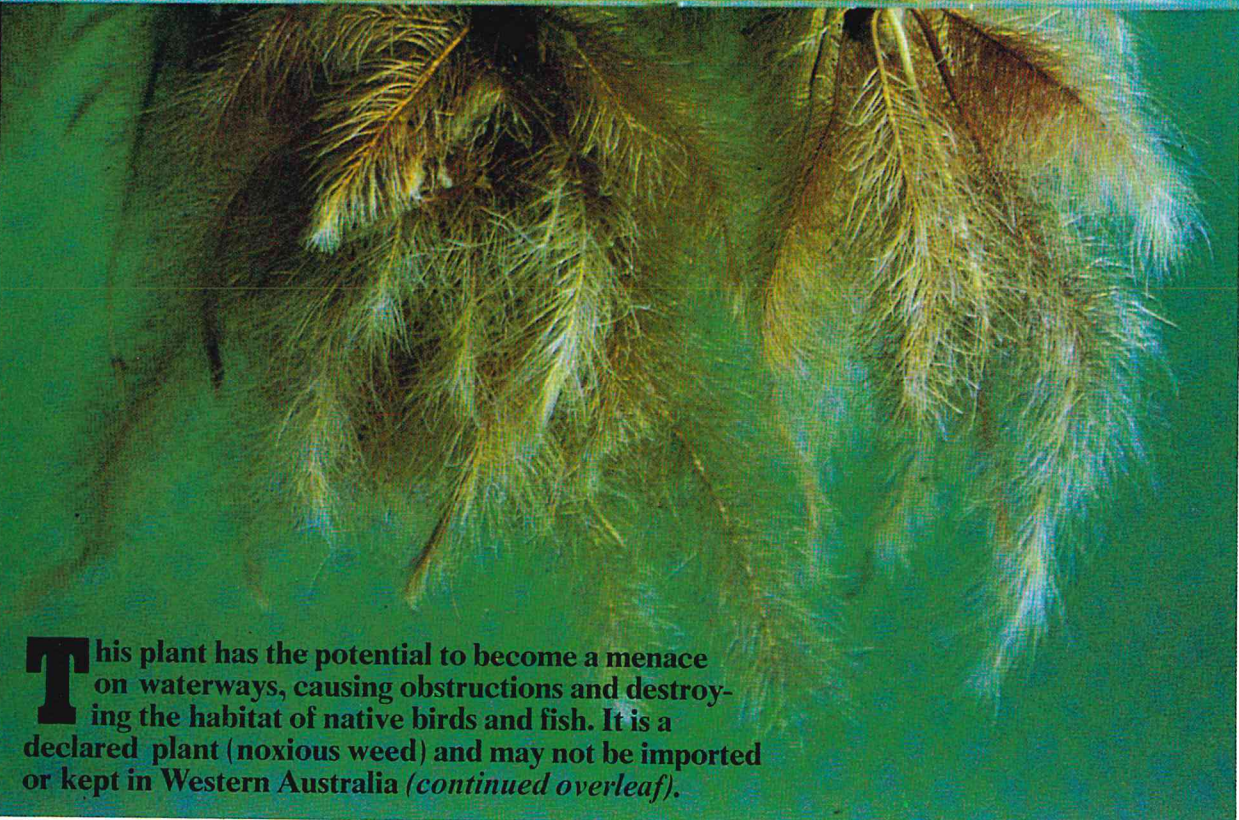
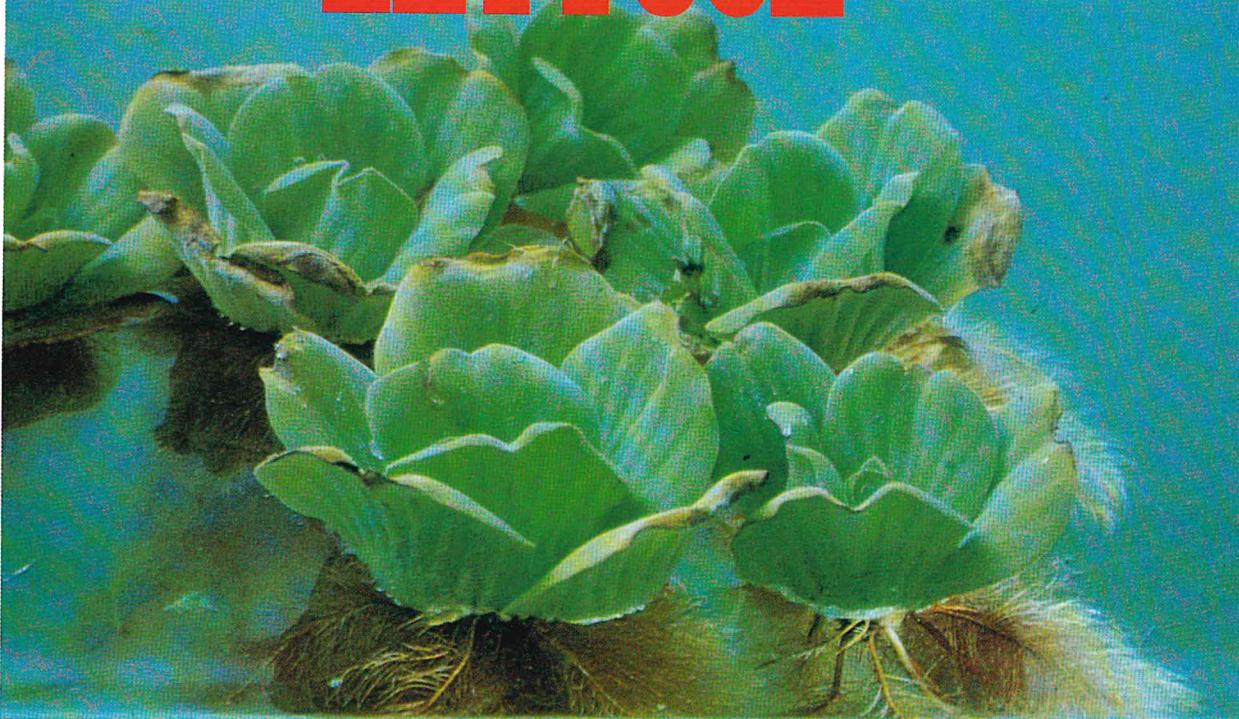


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Advisory Leaflet No. 40
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WATER LETTUCE



This plant has the potential to become a menace on waterways, causing obstructions and destroying the habitat of native birds and fish. It is a declared plant (noxious weed) and may not be imported or kept in Western Australia *(continued overleaf)*.

WATER LETTUCE

Water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*) is a potentially dangerous weed of waterways in Western Australia. When established it can rapidly spread over the entire surface of freshwater lakes and rivers. The dense mats of plant material produced can obstruct waterways and destroy the habitat of many fish and water birds. This aquatic plant is native to most tropical and some sub-tropical regions. It was introduced into Western Australia as an ornamental plant for aquaria and ponds.

Water lettuce is a declared plant (noxious weed) in Western Australia. It cannot be imported into the State or kept here and

all plants present must be destroyed. This is best done by drying out and burning the plants.

Description:

Water lettuce is a free floating, aquatic plant. It is a perennial plant in the tropics, but its growth is reduced by cold winter conditions, and frost will kill it. A single plant can be up to 20 cm in diameter, under ideal growth conditions.

Water lettuce has greenish yellow, ribbed, fan-shaped leaves. The leaves are densely covered with short hairs that trap air, repel water and provide the plant's buoyancy. Its feathery roots can extend down to 1 metre.

Propagation is mainly by vegetative

means, with new plants being produced on runners.

Small, inconspicuous white flowers are produced in the centre of mature plants. These apparently do not set seed under the conditions in southern Australia.

Urgent action is essential to eradicate isolated patches of Water lettuce, to prevent the weed getting established.

Suspect plants should be reported to the Agriculture Protection Board, telephone PERTH (09) 367 0111 or any country officer of the Agriculture Protection Board or Department of Agriculture.