

Benefiting commercial aquaculture,
conserving natural resources

Aquatic Plant Aquaculture: Rules and Regulations

Division of Aquaculture

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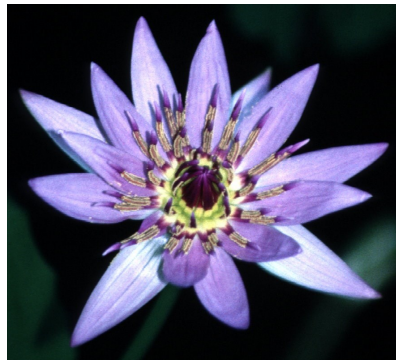
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Aquatic plants are produced, primarily in the central and southern regions of Florida, for aquarium, water gardening and wetland restoration markets. They are available bunched, bare-root or potted depending on growth characteristics, desired use and value. Aquatic plants add color and habitat to aquatic systems, and absorb nutrients which help maintain a balanced and healthy ecosystem, whether in a small aquarium or large, natural waterbody. Aquatic plants are also produced for smaller niche markets such as biofuels and food products.



RESTORATION PLANTS

Another industry for aquatic plants in Florida is the restoration market where aquatic plants can be used by ecologists, engineers and other professionals to restore damaged wetlands or create water storage filtration areas for stormwater runoff. Aesthetics, hardiness and the ability to uptake nutrients are considerations in regards to native species used for this market and include submerged, floating and emergent plants. Restoration species include both fresh and saltwater plants such as Cattail, Bulrush, native Lilies, Pickerelweed, seagrasses and mangroves.

PERMITTING

Aquatic plant nurseries are regulated by two divisions within the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), the Division of Aquaculture and the [Division of Plant Industry](#) (DPI). Pursuant to [Chapter 597.004 F.S.](#), aquatic plant growers must have an [Aquaculture Certificate of Registration](#) and a [Certificate of Nursery Registration](#).

Persons interested in starting a nursery or farm for commercial production and sale of aquatic plants must [apply for an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration](#) and comply with [Chapter 5L-3, F.A.C.](#) and [Best Management Practices](#) (BMPs) in accordance with [Chapter 597 F.S.](#) The Division of Aquaculture reviews and inspects all aquaculture facilities and production practices, including aquatic plants to ensure compliance with all aspects of the BMPs.



DPI regulates the horticulture sector which commercially propagates plants. The primary role of DPI, with respect to the aquatic plant industry, is to oversee the import and export of non-native species and movement of pests. The purpose of this oversight is to prevent the introduction and spread of nuisance plants, pests or diseases which may negatively impact Florida's native species and ecosystems.

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ORNAMENTAL PLANTS

Common types of freshwater aquarium plants include *Anacharis spp.*, *Camboma spp.*, *Aponogeton spp.*, *Anubias spp.*, *Cryptocoryne spp.*, *Egeria densa*, *Echinodorus spp.* and *Vallisneria spp.*

Marine aquarium plants are also aquacultured in Florida primarily for use in saltwater refugiums, and includes species such as *Caulerpa spp.*, *Chaetomorpha spp.*, and *Gracilaria spp.*

Water gardening, *constructed ponds for aesthetic purposes*, is also a popular market for aquatic plants in Florida. Aquatic plants, such as Water Lilies, Lotuses, Canna, and Iris, are essential components in ponds and water features and add beauty and value to residential or commercial landscapes.



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PROHIBITIONS

Aquatic plant producers must be aware there are two classes of [Prohibited Aquatic Plants in Florida](#). Class I plants are not permitted for possession, collection, transportation, cultivation, and importation, except as provided in [Rule 5B-64.011, F.A.C.](#) Class II plants may be cultured in an aquatic plant nursery and exported out-of-state **only with DPI approval**.



A listing of all Class I and Class II Prohibited Aquatic Plants is found in [Rule 5B-64.011, F.A.C.](#) To remain in compliance with Aquaculture BMPs, aquaculturists indicating they wish to produce any Class I or Class II plants will need to provide authorization from DPI to the Division of Aquaculture **prior to** importing, cultivating or exporting any prohibited plant species.

The National Plant Board maintains a list of [Federal and State regulated aquatic plant species](#), which can be used to determine specific regulations that may apply to the importation/exportation of aquatic plants to or from Florida. Note that this list may not be completely up-to-date with individual state regulations. Farmers should confirm regulations on a case-by-case basis.



If you intend to culture aquatic plants, you must employ measures to ensure that these plants are contained at your facility. These methods are outlined in the containment section of the Non-native and Restricted Non-native Species chapter of the [BMPs](#).

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

For technical assistance with aquatic plants, including biology, propagation, culture methods and growth requirements, contact Dr. Lyn Gettys with the University of Florida's Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center Aquatic and Wetland Plants Laboratory at (954) 577-6331 or LGettys@ufl.edu or visit FLREC.IFAS.UFL.edu/Featured-3-Menus/Research-/Aquatic-Plant-Management/.

For habitat restoration aquaculture assistance, contact Dr. Joshua Patterson at The Florida Aquarium's Center for Conservation in Apollo Beach at (813) 419-4917 or JoshPatterson@ufl.edu.

LICENSING

For further information about an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration, the Aquaculture Best Management Practices or if have any other questions regarding aquatic plant aquaculture in Florida, please contact the Division of Aquaculture at (850) 617-7616 or by email at Aquaculture_Web@FreshFromFlorida.com.

For licensing information for aquatic plants regarding a nursery, nursery stock dealer, retail outlet or wild collection of freshwater aquatic plants, contact the Division of Plant Industry or visit:

FreshFromFlorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Plant-Industry/Business-Services/Registrations-and-Certifications/Aquatic-Plant-Permit-Information2.

For licensing information regarding the wild collection of marine plants, contact Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission or visit: MyFWC.com/License/Aquatic-Plants.

Individuals that plan to sell their aquatic plant products for human consumption must contact the Division of Food Safety to determine if a Food Permit is required for their operation. For more information visit: FreshFromFlorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Food-Safety.

