



1. Habit with numerous spreading stems. 2. Close-up of paired leaves and stem with dense spreading hairs. 3. Piece of stem rooting at the joints. 4. Small bluish-purple flowers.



Hairy water hyssop (*Bacopa lanigera*)

Introduced

Not Declared

Hairy water hyssop is a small aquatic plant native to South America (i.e. Brazil and Paraguay) that is also known as hairy bacopa. It is sometimes grown as an aquarium plant and is becoming established in wetter sites in the coastal parts of eastern Australia.

Distribution

Hairy water hyssop has been in Australia for some time, but was mistaken for the similar Water hyssop (*Bacopa caroliniana*) until 2009. The first known occurrence of it becoming established outside cultivation in Australia was in 1999, when it was recorded growing all over a small farm dam in the Beaudesert area. It has since been recorded at a couple of locations in Logan City, in a waterway in Moreton Bay Regional Council, and along a creek near Port Douglas in northern Queensland. More recently, infestations have been noted growing around a farm dam in Redland City and in a small wetland at the Gold Coast.

Description

This plant is capable of growing underwater, on the water surface, or on land. It usually produces numerous branched creeping stems that spread across muddy soil or float on shallow water. These stems regularly produce roots at the joints and are densely covered in relatively long spreading hairs. Its small glossy green leaves (8-20 mm long and 6-15 mm wide) are borne in pairs along the stems. These leaves are stalkless and almost rounded in shape, with entire margins and rounded tips.

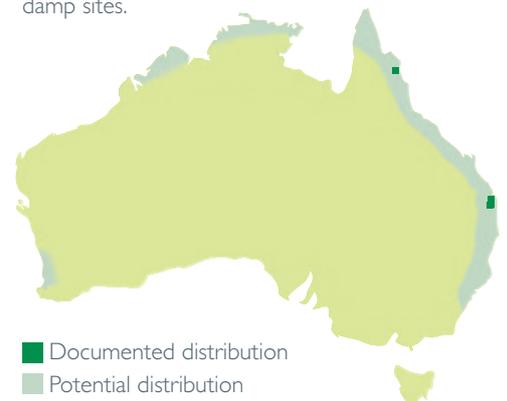
The small bluish-purple flowers (about 10 mm long) are arranged singly in the leaf forks near the end of the branches. They are borne on slender stalks (5-20 mm) long that are also hairy. Each flower has two green bracts at its base and the petals are formed into a short tube with five spreading lobes at the tip. The fruit is a small capsule (4-5 mm long) containing numerous tiny seeds. However, it usually remains hidden inside the persistent sepals.

Quick Facts

- > A creeping aquatic plant that forms very dense mats in mud or shallow water
- > Stems produce roots where they come into contact with soil
- > Stems densely covered in spreading hairs
- > Small leaves borne in pairs and almost rounded in shape
- > Small bluish-purple flowers borne singly on slender stalks

Habitat

This species is mostly commonly found growing in and around farm dams and along small or slow-moving waterways. It may also grow in swamps and wetlands, along drainage lines and in other damp sites.





1. Dense infestation in a paperbark swamp on the Gold Coast 2. Close-up of flower showing tubular base and hairy stalk.

Reproduction and Dispersal

Hairy water hyssop can reproduce by seed or by pieces of stem - which will readily take root in wet areas. This species is most likely spread into natural areas by the dumping of aquarium waste. Once present in the environment, seeds or stem segments can be spread downstream during floods or inadvertently transported to new areas (i.e. on vehicles, boats, shoes or animals).

Why is it an Emerging Threat?

This species has demonstrated the capacity to form dense mats of vegetation in wetlands, along waterways and on farm dams. If left uncontrolled, it can displace native species and form a monoculture. This not only reduces the biodiversity of these areas, but can also decrease the water quality and restrict water movement.

Control Methods

Individual plants or small infestations can be removed manually, taking care to ensure that no stem and root material remains in the soil. Once collected, all plant material should be removed from the site and disposed of in a sanitary manner. Prevent further spread of the weed to other areas by avoiding fragmentation of stem material.

When larger infestations are present, or where access is more difficult, the use of herbicides may be necessary. While there are no herbicides currently registered for the control of this species in Australia, the control of environmental weeds such as Hairy water hyssop is currently allowed in Queensland via off-label permit 11463 (<http://permits.apvma.gov.au/PERI1463.PDF>). Under this permit, the use of aquatically registered formulations of Glyphosate (e.g. Round-up Biactive and Weedmaster Duo) is permitted for the spot spraying of weeds in aquatic and wetland areas. For control within other state boundaries, see the relevant permits or government legislation.

Look a-likes

Hairy water hyssop is very similar to another weed known as Water hyssop (*Bacopa caroliniana*) and relatively similar to a native plant known as Bacopa or Brahmi (*Bacopa monnieri*). However, neither of these species have a dense covering of spreading hairs on their stems, and *Bacopa monnieri* usually has whitish flowers.



Top. Water hyssop without spreading hairs on stems.

Bottom. Whitish flowers and hairless stems of the native *Bacopa monnieri*.

The control methods referred to in Weed Watch™ should be used in accordance with the restrictions (federal and state legislation and local government laws) directly or indirectly related to each control method. These restrictions may prevent the utilisation of one or more of the methods referred to, depending on individual circumstances. While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, Technigro does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.

This information has been developed with the assistance of Dr Sheldon Navie. Photographs are also courtesy of Dr Sheldon Navie and Shaun Winterton © Technigro Australia Pty Ltd 2012

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