

editor's note

It's an exciting time for the Exotic Pest Plant Council. New chapters are springing up almost as fast as kudzu in the springtime. Southeast EPPC is a reality - Brian Bowen has agreed to serve as the SE-EPPC coordinator (see his article on page 15), and SE-EPPC

editor, Steve Manning has agreed to serve on the editorial board of *Wildland Weeds*. Weed whackers in the Mid-Atlantic states met in March, and it sounds like they may be on the verge of forming a MA-EPPC. Look for updates on new EPPC chapters in future issues.

Regional EPPCs make sense. Many plants like *Salvinia molesta* (see Colette Jacono's article below) must be ad-

dressed regionally. If states can work together - in identification, detection, education, and control - the chances of stopping a pest plant are good. Shortly after writing this article, Colette learned that *S. molesta* has been found "molesting" several sites in Mississippi and Hawaii - two states that were previously thought to be in the clear. So...keep your eyes peeled! -Amy Ferriter

Salvinia molesta

A Giant Among Noxious Weeds



Fig. 1. Mature giant salvinia has large, upright leaves and a chain of sporocarps attached among the underwater filaments.

by Colette Jacono,
U.S. Geologic Survey

September 1998 marked an important discovery in the history of US weed invasions. It was late summer, following a particularly droughty season, when giant salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) was first found floating near the Louisiana shoreline of Toledo Bend Reservoir, a 186,000 acre impoundment on the Texas/Louisiana border. The first occurrence of this extremely aggressive aquatic fern in a US public water body has caused deserved alarm. Giant salvinia touts a history of well known invasions responsible for social and economic impacts in many countries (Thomas and Room, 1986).

The Toledo Bend discovery had been foreshadowed by seemingly "less

important" reports earlier that summer. The species was first identified in a poly-lined schoolyard demonstration pond in Houston, Texas and soon after confirmations were made at farm ponds in the surrounding region. Autumn rains washed hidden masses of giant salvinia from sloughs and oxbows surrounding Toledo Bend into the reservoir. The same storms resulted in flooding and spilling of at least one Texas farm pond into a nearby creek. It was clear at this time that the weed was never at any level of containment. Local watersheds were just as vulnerable to infestation from private ponds as they were from large flowing water bodies. Fueled by the concern of biologists at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Sabine River Authority, increased field surveys resulted in new discoveries on a monthly basis in the region. Particularly critical infestations

in Texas included Swinney Lake, an impounded swampland on the lower reaches of the Trinity River, and canals and bayous on the Sabine River, below the dam at Toledo Bend Reservoir. Slow waters and marshes of the lower Trinity provide important waterfowl habitat, while water from the lower Sabine is pumped eastward into Louisiana for use in rice and crayfish farms.

The release of a series of flyers helped lead to discoveries of giant

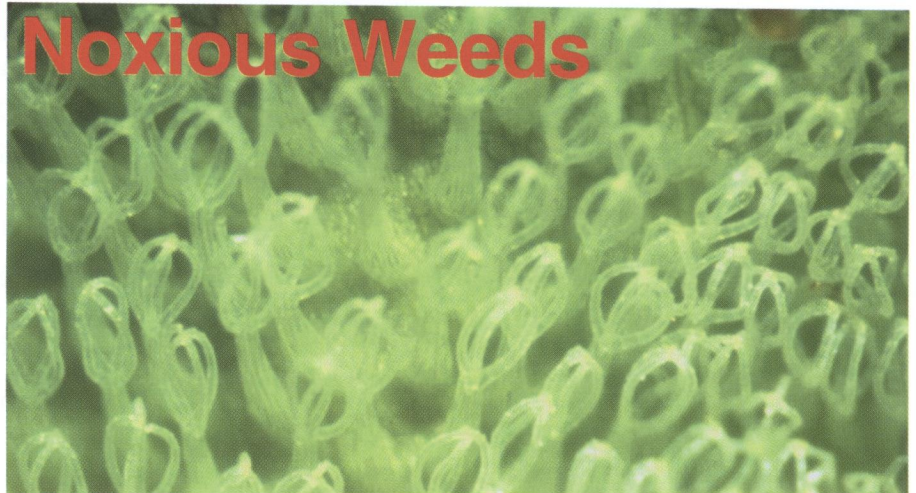


Fig 2. Cage-like hairs can be seen with a 10x hand lens and are characteristic for all *Salvinia* species listed as noxious weeds.



Fig 3. Variable forms of giant salvinia range from the colonizing to mat-forming stage.