

GREEN GONE BAD

FEATURED ORNAMENTAL PLANT: *NYMPHOIDES CRISTATA* (CRESTED FLOATING HEART)

Some exotic ornamental plants behave badly when they escape from the place they are planted. Infestations of these plants have negative impacts on nature. One of these plants is *Nymphoides cristata*; common name: Crested Floating Heart.

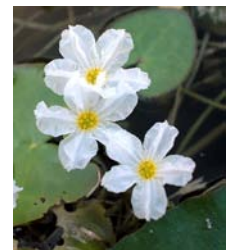
NYMPHOIDES CRISTATA is an herbaceous aquatic plant with floating stems from a buried rootstock in the family Menyanthaceae. The native range of *Nymphoides cristata* is Asia. It was first introduced to the U.S. as a water garden plant. Once established in a waterway, fragments of the plant are spread by wind, flowing water, boats, and trailers. *It is currently still being sold in the water garden trade.*



Nymphoides cristata has slender tuberous roots that dangle from the stem-leaf node. The plant has a single heart-shaped leaf with smooth margins, cordate base, and short petiole at the tip of each stem. The flowers are white, with membranous margins, 0.3-0.9" wide and the petal lobes have a ruffled crest (like a rooster's comb) along the upper midvein. It blooms from summer to fall. Fruits are oblong capsules with smooth, rounded seeds.



The problem with *Nymphoides cristata* is that it can escape from planted water gardens or fish ponds into natural water bodies, ditches, canals. Control using herbicide has been largely ineffective. Drought and freezing temperatures have failed to halt the spread of this plant. The vegetation forms dense mats that shade out and interfere with the growth of native aquatic plants. This results in the reduction of plant biodiversity and overall quality of natural aquatic communities. Native aquatic animals like fish, insects, reptiles, amphibians; and terrestrial animals like birds suffer from degraded habitat.



It is not widely known among horticulturalists and landscapers that this plant can be harmful to natural habitats. Please consider removing this species from your inventory. There are many native aquatic plants that can be sold and planted in its place. These include *Nuphar lutea*, *Nymphaea odorata*, *Nelumbo lutea*, and *Brasenia schreberi*. For more information please visit

<http://www.eddmaps.org/southeast/distribution/point.cfm?id=633409> and <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/node/291>.



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