



Pale Yellow Iris-Yellow Flag Iris

Yellow flag iris is a perennial aquatic plant which thrives in temperate climates such as Alberta. Native to Africa, Asia, and Europe, it was introduced to North America as a pond ornamental plant. It has tuberous roots, usually 10-20 cm long. They are used by plants to survive the winter or dry months and provide energy and nutrients for re-growth during the next growing season. It reproduces both by seed and by pink, freely branching root-like structures called rhizomes, 2-3 cm in diameter. These fast spreading rhizomes can outcompete other plants for space, forming thickets like native cattails. It is generally a wetland plant but rhizomes can survive being dry for at least 3 months. Yellow flag iris dies back over winter, re-grows in the spring, and flowers late spring/early summer. It may be confused with cattails or other irises when not in bloom.

Yellow flag iris grows in wetlands and margins of water bodies. It requires continuously high soil-water content but does not need to be submerged. It can grow in water up to 25 cm deep. It can grow in peats (acidic) and permanently submerged organic (high nutrient) or inorganic/sandy soils at edge of water bodies. It requires full sun to partial shade. Rhizome fragments can drift to new habitats and form new infestations. Flooding disturbance plays a key role in establishment, and water dispersed seeds are often deposited along the high water mark.

Identification:

- Stems: Are 40-150 cm tall, one to several, and usually shorter than or equaling the leaves.
- Leaves: Are dark green, 50-100 cm long and 10-30 mm wide, and come to a fine point. They are erect at first and then curve as they get longer.
- Flowers: Are pale yellow (varying from pale yellow to almost orange), 8-10 cm diameter. Flowers have 6 clawed segments including 3 large downward-spreading and 3 smaller erect petals

Control: Efforts are most likely to succeed when patches are small and manageable. Use an integrated approach of monitoring for seedlings and re-growth. Pulling/cutting yellow flag iris repeatedly over several years can eventually kill plant. Digging is effective but can fragment rhizomes which can produce new plants, so be sure to remove as much plant debris as possible. The disturbance associated with digging can facilitate seed germination. Dead heading prevents seed production but does not affect the plants.¹ Be sure to wear long sleeves and gloves as yellow flag iris causes skin irritation. Currently no selective herbicides are registered for use on yellow flag iris.