

## South American Spongeplant is Invading California

*Patrick Akers*  
*Calif. Dept. of Food and Agriculture*  
*1220 N St, Rm. 341, Sacramento, CA 95814*  
*pakers@cdfa.ca.gov*

South American spongeplant (*Limnobium laevigatum*) is a water hyacinth wannabe that may have the potential to be even more persistent and widespread in California than hyacinth itself. Unlike hyacinth, it produces many seeds and very small seedlings, so it moves more easily than hyacinth. The seeds can also lay dormant for at least four years, so it returns quickly after control measures if a seed bank has been established.

In the last several years, South American spongeplant has advanced its establishment in California, especially in the Central Valley.

Spongeplant first appeared in 2003 in a single 5-acre pond in Redding. The plant was easily controlled with diquat, but this initial infestation still requires treatment after six years.

Beginning in 2007, spongeplant began to pop up in well-separated locations in the San Joaquin Valley, centered in the Fresno area including the San Joaquin River. Infestations in any one location are relatively easy to eradicate if they are caught early, but the plant's mobility and ready recovery from seeds present challenges to eradicating it from the state.

This talk will describe the spread of the plant and some of the control efforts.