

Ludwigia grandiflora spp. *hexapetala* (Creeping Water Primrose,
Uruguay Water Primrose, Hairy Water Primrose)
Onagraceae (Evening-primrose Family)



Initial Introduction and Expansion in Range

Native to Central and South America, *Ludwigia grandiflora* spp. *hexapetala* was introduced to the United States as an ornamental and water garden plant because of its abundant, showy, yellow flowers. It is now widely distributed from the middle Atlantic region to Florida, westward to Texas and along the west coast. It is currently found throughout North Carolina and is listed as a Class B state noxious weed. Anyone who suspects an infestation in North Carolina should report it to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Weed Specialist at 1-800-206-9333. *Ludwigia grandiflora* spp. *hexapetala* reproduces by seeds and vegetatively from root and stem fragments that readily re-sprout.

Description and Biology

- Perennial herb that can be found creeping along the shoreline, floating on the water surface, or growing upright.
- Early in the growing season, *L. grandiflora* spp. *hexapetala* produces light, green, floating stems with rosettes of smooth, somewhat shiny, rounded leaves.
- Later in the season as the stems emerge from the water, they become hairy, woody, and reddish brown, and may begin to split lengthwise.
- Leaves become elongated and strap-shaped with pointed tips on erect stems.
- Flowers with 5 to 6 bright yellow petals appear during the early summer and are produced until the end of August or early September.

Habitats Susceptible to Invasion

Ludwigia grandiflora spp. *hexapetala* forms dense mats up to 3 feet tall in marshes, swamps, ditches, ponds, and around lake margins. The amphibious character of this *Ludwigia* species allows it to creep into moist terrestrial habitat surrounding open water.

Ludwigia grandiflora spp. *hexapetala* presents a direct threat to native plant and animal communities by growing over surrounding vegetation

and producing a thick mat of woody perennial stems and decaying plant material. This mat inhibits the recruitment of other plants and eliminates open water foraging grounds for birds and other wildlife.

Prevention and Control

Mechanical methods such as cutting, dredging, and hand-pulling have been attempted to control *L. grandiflora* spp. *hexapetala*. These methods are difficult and costly, and since *L. grandiflora* spp. *hexapetala* is a perennial that readily re-sprouts from root and stem fragments, mechanical removal that does not completely eliminate the root system or is not done in conjunction with a systemic herbicide treatment to kill the roots, will likely result in re-growth. Grass carp do not find *L. grandiflora* spp. *hexapetala* palatable so, to date, attempts at the biological control of this plant have been unsuccessful.

The 2 chemicals that have had the greatest success in controlling *L. grandiflora* spp. *hexapetala* are glyphosate and triclopyr. Treat *L. grandiflora* spp. *hexapetala* with a 2 percent solution of glyphosate or triclopyr plus a surfactant (formulations approved for aquatic sites) early in the growing season when the canopy of the plant is less dense, allowing for a more thorough penetration of the chemicals. Follow-up treatments in successive years will likely be necessary. Always consult with the NCDENR-DWR Aquatic Weed Control Program before initiating any control method using chemicals in aquatic areas.



Ludwigia grandiflora spp. *hexapetala* photography by Robert J. Richardson, N.C. State University.