



Aquatic Plant Aquaculture: Rules and Regulations

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Aquatic plants are produced for aquarium, water gardening and wetland restoration markets. They are available bunched, bare-root or potted depending on growth characteristics, desired use and value. Aquatic plants add color and habitat to aquatic systems, and absorb nutrients which help maintain a balanced and healthy ecosystem, whether in a small aquarium or a large waterbody. Aquatic plants are also produced for small niche markets such as biofuels and food products.

ORNAMENTAL PLANTS

Common types of freshwater aquarium plants include *Anacharis* spp., *Camboma* spp., *Aponogeton* spp., *Anubias* spp., *Cryptocoryne* spp., *Egeria densa*, *Echinodorus* spp. and *Vallisneria* spp.

Marine aquarium plants are also farmed in Florida primarily for use in saltwater refugia, and include species such as *Caulerpa* spp., *Chaetomorpha* spp., and *Gracilaria* spp.

Water gardening (i.e., constructed ponds for aesthetic purposes) is also a popular market for aquatic plants in Florida. Aquatic plants, such as water lily, lotus, canna, and iris, are essential components in ponds and water features and add beauty and value to residential or commercial landscapes.



Purple Water Lily Flower

RESTORATION PLANTS

Another market for aquatic plants in Florida is the restoration market where aquatic plants can be used by ecologists, engineers and other professionals to restore damaged wetlands or create water storage filtration areas for stormwater runoff. Aesthetics, hardiness and the ability to uptake nutrients are important considerations for native species to be used in this market. Restoration plants may include submerged, floating and emergent varieties. Restoration species include both fresh and saltwater plants such as cattail, bulrush, native lily, pickerelweed, seagrass and mangrove.

PERMITTING

Aquatic plant nurseries are regulated by two divisions within the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), the [Division of Aquaculture](#) and the [Division of Plant Industry](#) (DPI). Pursuant to [Section 597.004, Florida Statutes \(F.S.\)](#), aquatic plant growers must have an [Aquaculture Certificate of Registration](#) and a [Certificate of Nursery Registration](#).

Persons interested in starting a nursery or farm for commercial production and sale of aquatic plants must apply for an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration and comply with [Chapter 5L-3, Florida Administrative Code \(F.A.C.\)](#) and [Best Management Practices \(BMPs\)](#) in accordance with [Chapter 597, F.S.](#) The Division of Aquaculture inspects all aquaculture facilities including aquatic plant sites to ensure compliance with all aspects of the BMPs.



Aquatic Plant Greenhouse

DPI regulates the horticulture sector, which commercially propagates plants. The primary role of DPI, with respect to the aquatic plant industry, is to oversee the import and export of non-native species and movement of pests. The purpose of this oversight is to prevent the introduction and spread of nuisance plants, pests or diseases which may negatively impact Florida's native species and ecosystems.



PROHIBITIONS

Aquatic plant producers must be aware there are two classes of Prohibited Aquatic Plants in Florida. Class I plants are not permitted for possession, collection, transportation, cultivation and importation except as provided in [Rule 5B-64.011, F.A.C.](#)

Class II plants may be cultured in an aquatic plant nursery and exported out-of-state **only with DPI approval**.

A list of all Class I and Class II Prohibited Aquatic Plants is found in [Rule 5B-64.011, F.A.C.](#) To remain in compliance with Aquaculture BMPs, aquaculturists indicating they wish to produce any Class I or Class II plants will need to provide authorization from DPI to the Division of Aquaculture prior to importing, cultivating or exporting any prohibited plant species.

The National Plant Board maintains a list of [federal and state regulated aquatic plant species](#), which can be used to determine specific regulations that apply to the importation or exportation of aquatic plants. Note that this list may not be completely up-to-date with individual state regulations. Aquaculturists should confirm regulations with the state intended for shipment.

If you intend to culture aquatic plants, you must employ measures to ensure that these plants are contained at your facility. These methods are outlined in the Non-Native Species Containment and Restricted Non-Native Species Containment sections of the [BMPs](#).



Albert Greenberg Tropical Waterlily

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

For technical assistance on aquatic plants, including biology, propagation, culture methods and growth requirements, contact Dr. Lyn Gettys with the University of Florida's Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center, Aquatic and Wetland Plants Laboratory via phone at (954) 577-6331 or email at LGettys@ufl.edu. Visit FLREC.IFAS.ufl.edu/extension/aquatic-plant-management/ for more information.

For habitat restoration aquaculture assistance, contact Dr. Joshua Patterson at The Florida Aquarium's Center for Conservation in Apollo Beach via phone at (813) 419-4917 or email at JoshPatterson@ufl.edu.

LICENSING

For further information about an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration, the Aquaculture BMPs or if you have any other questions regarding aquatic plant aquaculture in Florida, please contact the Division of Aquaculture by email at Aquaculture_Certificate@FDACS.gov or call (850) 617-7600.

For licensing information regarding aquatic plants, regarding a nursery, nursery stock dealer, retail outlet or wild collection of freshwater aquatic plants, contact the [Division of Plant Industry](#).

For licensing information regarding the wild collection of marine plants, contact [Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission](#).

Individuals that plan to sell their aquatic plant products for human consumption must contact the [Division of Food Safety](#) to determine if a Food Permit is required for their operation.



String Lily

