AQUATIC VEGETATION AND WEEDS

Glossary

Microalgae
Algae which can only be seen with a microscope.

Macroalgae
Algae which can be seen without using a microscope.

For More Information

Contact

Eastern Hills Catchment Management Program
Tel: (08) 9424 2222

Shire of Mundaring
Bushcare Co-ordinator
Tel: (08) 9290 6685

Shire of Kalamunda
Bushcare Co-ordinator
Tel: (08) 9257 9936

Introduction

The introduction and spread of exotic flora and fauna continue to have a significant effect on inland aquatic ecosystems.

Aquatic Flora

- Microalgae, macroalgae and seagrasses.
- Need light and oxygen
- Provide food, shelter and breeding sites for fish, reptiles, frogs, birds and other fauna.
- Extremely important in waterways ecosystems because they are the basis of the food web.
- Absorb nutrients, stop sediments from being washed away, and colour the water.
- Keep oxygen and nutrient levels balanced.
- How aquatic plants grow is affected by many natural factors such as salinity, temperature, light, nutrients, wave and current action and sedimentation.
- Vulnerable and can be easily degraded or destroyed by clearing, dredging and other human activities.

How Aquatic Plants are Affected

Changes to the environment caused by people can affect plants.

- Clearing the land and burning off can help introduced plants grow before native species.
- How much light gets into the water depends on how much debris or microscopic algae is in the water at the surface. This microscopic algal growth may prevent the light from reaching deeper water and limit the growth of rooted plants, such as seagrass.
- If the water is deeper or shallower than they are used to aquatic plants may not be able to regrow.
- Dredging, and dumping the spoil in another location, can destroy aquatic plants growing on the bottom where the dredging happens, and where the spoil is dumped.
- Stirring up the sediment during dredging also reduces how much light gets through to the bottom.
- Toxins may also be released from sediments. These poisons can affect aquatic plants and animals.
- Powered and keeled boats can disturb sediments and aquatic plants growing in the sediments.

Fringing Vegetation

- The land which surrounds waterways supports a diverse range of plant life
- The various names for this vegetation are: fringing vegetation, peripheral vegetation, foreshore vegetation (next to an estuary or sea), salt marsh vegetation (next to an estuary or sea and growing in saline conditions) and riparian vegetation (growing along a river).
- Important to how a waterways ecosystem works.
- Stabilises the banks with its roots (reducing the chances of erosion).
- Shelters wildlife (creates habitats for breeding, feeding and shelter).
- Filters nutrients from water heading to the waterway (reducing nutrient enrichment).
- Stores nutrients in its roots, branches and leaves (reducing nutrient enrichment).
- Boating, removing vegetation, stock and people walking on the banks interferes with fringing vegetation. Results in the destruction of vegetation.

Aquatic Weeds

Non native plant growing in or around waterways.

Effects

- Have ability to spread rapidly and form a dense mat above or below the water, which stops light entering and depletes the water body of oxygen.
- Expensive to eradicate. Prevention is cheaper.
- Disruption of recreational activities.
- Exclusion of native plants, causing loss of habitat for birds and fauna.
- The spread of certain diseases and pests.
- Block rivers and waterways.

Control and Rehabilitation

- Removal by hand common approach.
- Avoid the use of herbicides.
- Allow the regeneration of natural present fringing vegetation.
- In areas which are severely degraded, replant with local species.

In partnership with

References: www.rivercare.scric.org/resources/awrb/c6.6.html.
For a list of aquatic weeds species: www.agric.wa.gov.au/servlet/page?_pageid=449&_dad=portal30&_schema=PORTAL30