Yellowflag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*)

Identification: Yellowflag iris, a member of the iris family (Iridaceae), is a perennial, wetland plant growing from stout rhizomes which contain black sap. Plants grow 3 to 5 feet tall with long, linear leaves, 20 to 40 inches long and 0.4 to 1.2 inches wide. Erect flower stalks are round in cross-section and bear several flowers which are similar to common garden irises. Only two species of *Iris* are known to occur in Montana outside of horticultural plantings: one is yellowflag iris and the other is the native Rocky Mountain iris *(Iris missouriensis)*. The native iris has blue to purple flowers so it is unlikely to be mistaken for yellowflag iris when in bloom. When not in bloom, the two can be distinguished by the leaves or rhizomes. The leaves of Rocky Mountain iris are generally shorter (8 to 16 inches), and the rhizomes of the Rocky Mountain iris lack black sap.

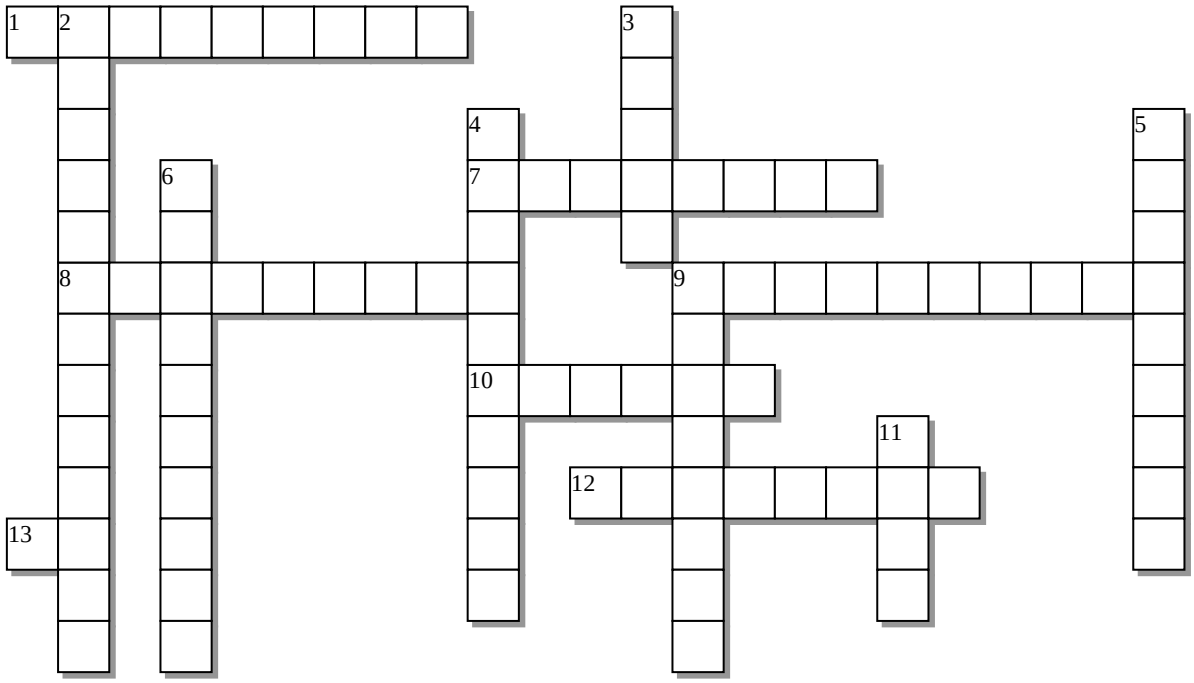
Impacts: Yellowflag iris forms dense monotypic colonies in riparian areas, crowding-out native species. This can alter riparian function and reduce habitat for wildlife, birds, fish and pollinators. In the eastern United States, reduction of native sedges and rushes that support waterfowl is associated with yellowflag iris invasion. Clumps of yellowflag iris can restrict water flow in irrigation and flood control ditches. Yellowflag iris is considered poisonous due to large amounts of glycosides in the leaves and rhizomes.

Habitat: Yellowflag is typically found in shallow waters, but can occur in depths of 2 to 3 feet. Adaptable to full sun or partial shade, it occurs in forested or open wetlands, riparian and floodplain communities, and in swamps. It is often seen growing along the banks of streams, rivers and irrigation ditches. It grows in temperate climates from sea level to 4300 feet in elevation.

Spread: Horticultural trade has spread yellowflag iris throughout the United States. Once established, it reproduces by seed and vegetatively through rhizomes. In a recent survey of 20 sites in Lake County, seed viability averaged 99%. Flooding may transport rhizomes or seeds downstream where they subsequently establish new colonies. Wave action along lake shores may also break-up rhizome clumps and result in establishment of new colonies along the shore.

Management Priorities: In Montana yellowflag iris is listed as a Priority 2A noxious weed, suggesting isolated populations should be contained or eradicated if possible. Yellowflag iris was first reported in Montana in Lake County in 1966, and has been found in Flathead, Missoula, Ravalli, Granite, Sanders and Gallatin Counties. Prevention and early detection are critical for yellowflag iris management. Monitor riparian and wetland areas, particularly near or downstream of known populations. In irrigation ditches where yellowflag iris is present, woven wire screens constructed at irrigation turnouts have been found to limit spread into adjacent ditches and wetlands. For more information on yellowflag iris, see Biology, Ecology and Management of Yellowflag Iris (*Iris pseudacorus* L.).
http://msuextension.org/publications/AgandNaturalResources/EB0203.pdf

Weed Post Puzzle: Test your knowledge of yellowflag iris



Across:

1 - Yellow flag iris belongs to this family

7 - Isn't this plant good for something? Well, herbalists used rhizomes as an emetic and a _____*

8 - Yellowflag iris may form _____ stands, or dense colonies of a single species

9 - An 8% _____ solution applied to leaves just as plants begin to flower has effectively reduced it (check with state agencies for licensing requirements before applying herbicides to wetlands)*

10 - Flowers have three upward pointing petals and three downward pointing _____ that resemble petals

12 - No flowers? Look for this in the rhizomes to determine its yellow flag iris (two words)

13 - Priority level of yellowflag iris in Montana

Down:

2 - It's an iris growing in a natural area with blue or purple flowers (two words)

3 - Spread and establishment potential is enhanced by seeds which contain air, allowing them to _____* and disperse longer distances

4 - Large quantities of _____ make yellowflag iris poisonous to livestock

5 - _____ _____ screens constructed in irrigation turnouts have been found to limit or prevent spread into adjacent ditches or wetlands (two words)

6 - Regular _____ of riparian and wetland areas is highly recommended to enable early detection and eradication

9 - The eastern-most county that yellowflag has been reported in Montana

11 - Yellowflag iris was first reported in Montana in this county

Solutions are posted to the MSU Extension Invasive Rangeland Weed website:
http://www.msuextension.org/invasiveplantsMangold/extensionsub.html

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Pulling Together Against Noxious Weeds