



# Cabomba, Fanwort

## *Cabomba caroliniana*



**C**abomba caroliniana is a submerged aquatic plant native to America. It became naturalized in Australia in 1988 after being present in the country for many decades, having been introduced as an aquarium plant.

Known infestations of cabomba in Australia are:

- Lake Nagambie (Victoria)
- Lake Benalla (Victoria)
- A farm dam in Foster (Victoria)
- Coastal rivers in Queensland
- Water storages in Queensland
- Coastal farm dams in New South Wales

### HABITAT

Cabomba grows readily in lakes, creeks, dams, ponds, backwaters of rivers and water storages, thriving in temperate areas. It grows both rooted in water to 3 metres deep and free-floating in deeper water.

### DESCRIPTION

A feathery, mostly submerged aquatic plant with fan-type leaves and flowers which float on the water surface.

**Leaves** — cabomba has linear leaves, mostly submerged, few emergent and much branched (3-7 times). The leaves are arranged oppositely on the stem and are covered in a thin gelatinous coating.

**Stems** — 2 m or more in length, also covered in a gelatinous coating. Stem fragments are capable of setting root and becoming a new plant.

**Flowers**—white with a yellow centre, 2 cm in diameter, solitary and emergent with 6 petals.

### LIFE CYCLE AND SPREAD

The maximum growth period of cabomba is summer. It does not regenerate by seed in Australia, new growth occurs as a result of dislodged stem fragments. Cabomba flowers during the warmer months.

### THE PROBLEM

Cabomba offers little value to wildlife and can become quite invasive as it has the ability to spread rapidly, covering large areas of water bodies. The plant currently causes huge problems in Queensland, where conditions are favourable for its success.

Problems which can arise from cabomba infestations include:

- Restriction of water flow
- Sediment build-up
- Major blockages of irrigation areas
- Tainting water
- Destruction of wetland habitat by creating dense thickets which block out sunlight and lead to the exclusion of desirable native water plants
- Recreational loss as dense thickets prevent swimming, boating and fishing
- Exclusion of both native flora and fauna (e.g. plants, birds, fish and reptiles) and creation of a monoculture. This is a serious threat to the biodiversity of Australian waterways.





**Dense mat**  
*This picture illustrates the dense mat cabomba can cause in waterways.*

## CONTROL

Goulburn-Murray Water is currently investigating a number of methods for the control of *Cabomba caroliniana*.

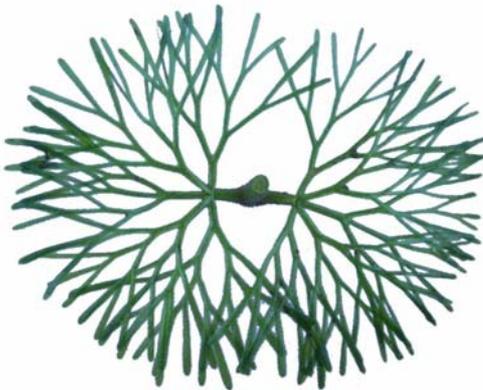
As for any submerged water weed, control is difficult due to restriction in use of herbicides in natural waterways. Cabomba contains rhizomes (stems capable of setting roots and establishing a new plant). Disruption of these stems is likely to result in the further spread of cabomba. Therefore mechanical control is not recommended for the control of cabomba. However if the infestation is isolated, mechanical control in conjunction with other control methods may be an option.

For more information on cabomba please contact Aquatic Plant Services, a unit of Goulburn-Murray Water:

Tatura	5824 3136
Kerang	5451 0154
Rochester	5484 0406

or go to G-MW's website:

[www.g-mwater.com.au](http://www.g-mwater.com.au)



**Leaf Whorl**  
*The fan-shaped leaf whorl of cabomba showing opposite leaves which are branched from 3-7 times.*



**Stem**  
*The stem of cabomba with the leaf whorls attached.*



**Flowers**  
*White with a yellow centre about 2 cm in diameter*

