

Taro root (*Colocasia esculenta*) Reported Naturalizing in California



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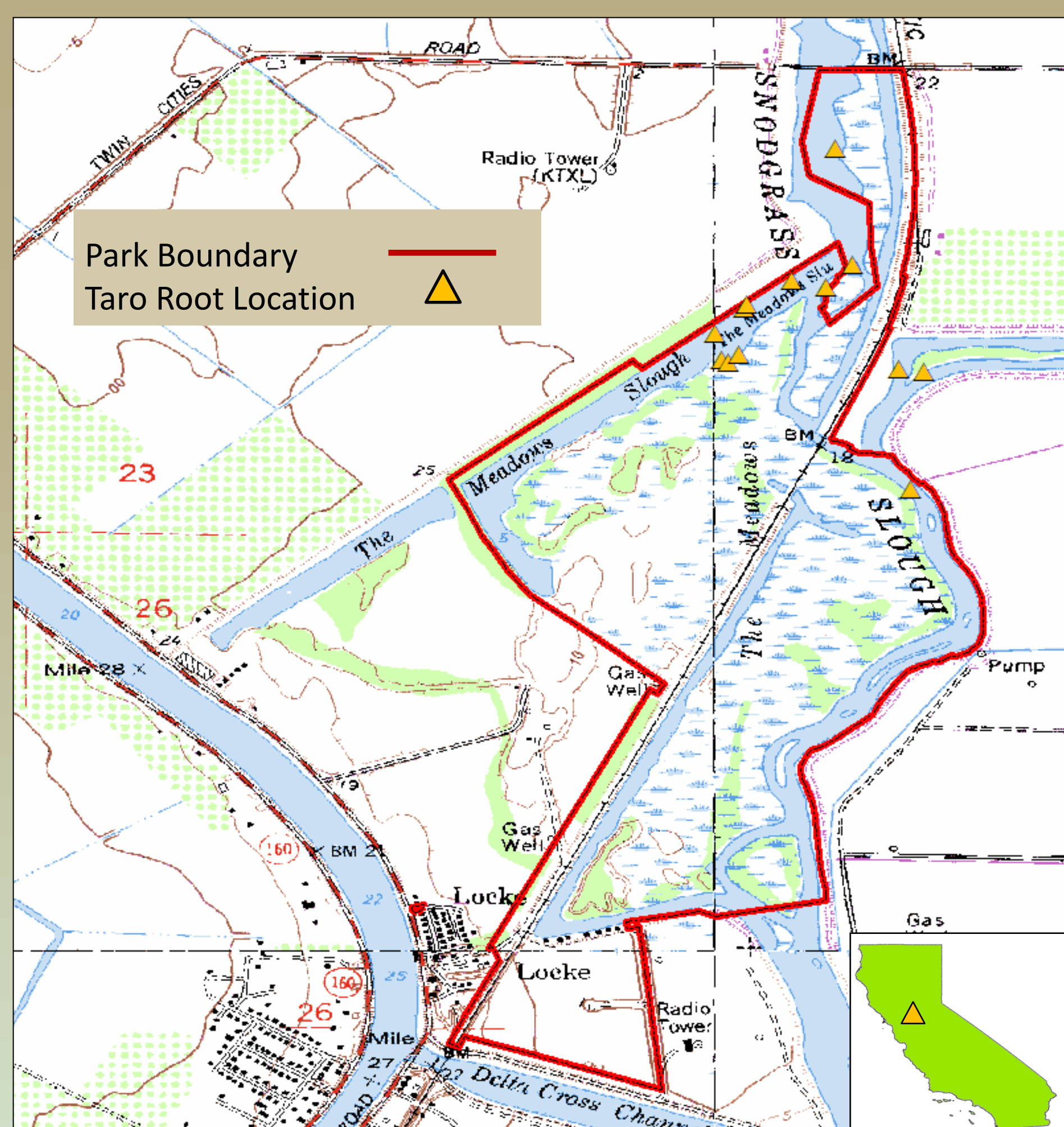
Abstract

In 2013 a large-leaved plant was reported growing along the banks of a State Parks property near Walnut Grove, CA. Samples were collected in 2014 and confirmed by botanists to be taro root (*Colocasia esculenta*). This plant had not been previously collected in the wild in California, however it is a specialty crop and is grown in the Central Valley, and is available horticulturally. A weed alert was prepared and sent out to determine if the species is more widespread in the San Joaquin Delta or elsewhere in California. We continue to compile more information on the distribution of this plant in California wildlands.

Documentation of Taro Root at Delta Meadows

In late 2013 resource managers at Delta Meadows, an unclassified State Parks property (Delta Meadows), located near Walnut Grove, CA, reported a large-leaved plant growing along the slough banks in several locations. Plants were collected in early 2014 and confirmed by CDFA botanists to be taro root (*Colocasia esculenta*). Taro root is native to southern India and southeast Asia, and is cultivated throughout the world as a food staple.

Another mapping visit was conducted in September 2014 and observations indicated that the plant had spread from previously mapped locations. The origin of the infestation at Delta Meadows is not known, but it may have been planted near the houseboats that are parked along The Meadows Slough in summer. Patches of taro root occur near the houseboats as well as across the slough and downstream. State Parks plans to attempt removal of taro root within Delta Meadows.



Delta Meadows Taro Root Mapping and Distribution, September 2014



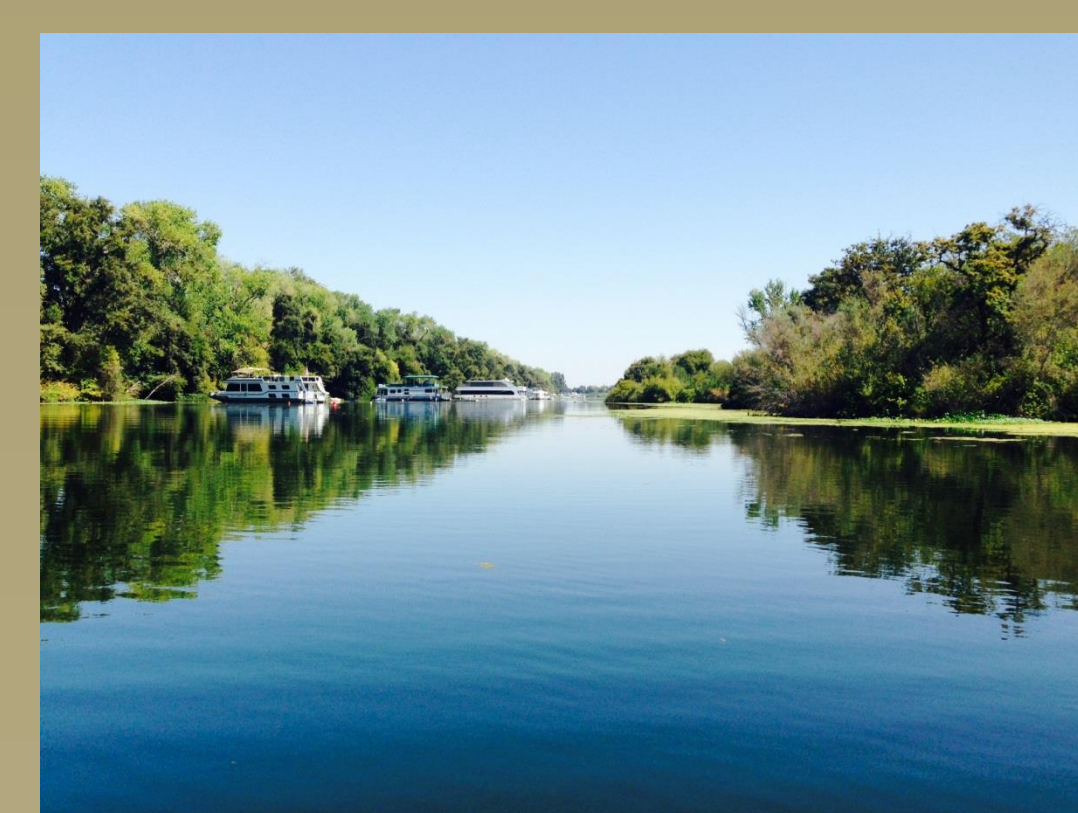
Taro Root Growing Near Residence Upstream of Delta Meadows



Taro Root, Delta Meadows



Mapping Taro Root at Delta Meadows



Houseboats Line The Meadows Slough at Delta Meadows



Taro Root Grows Adjacent to a Houseboat on The Meadows Slough at Delta Meadows



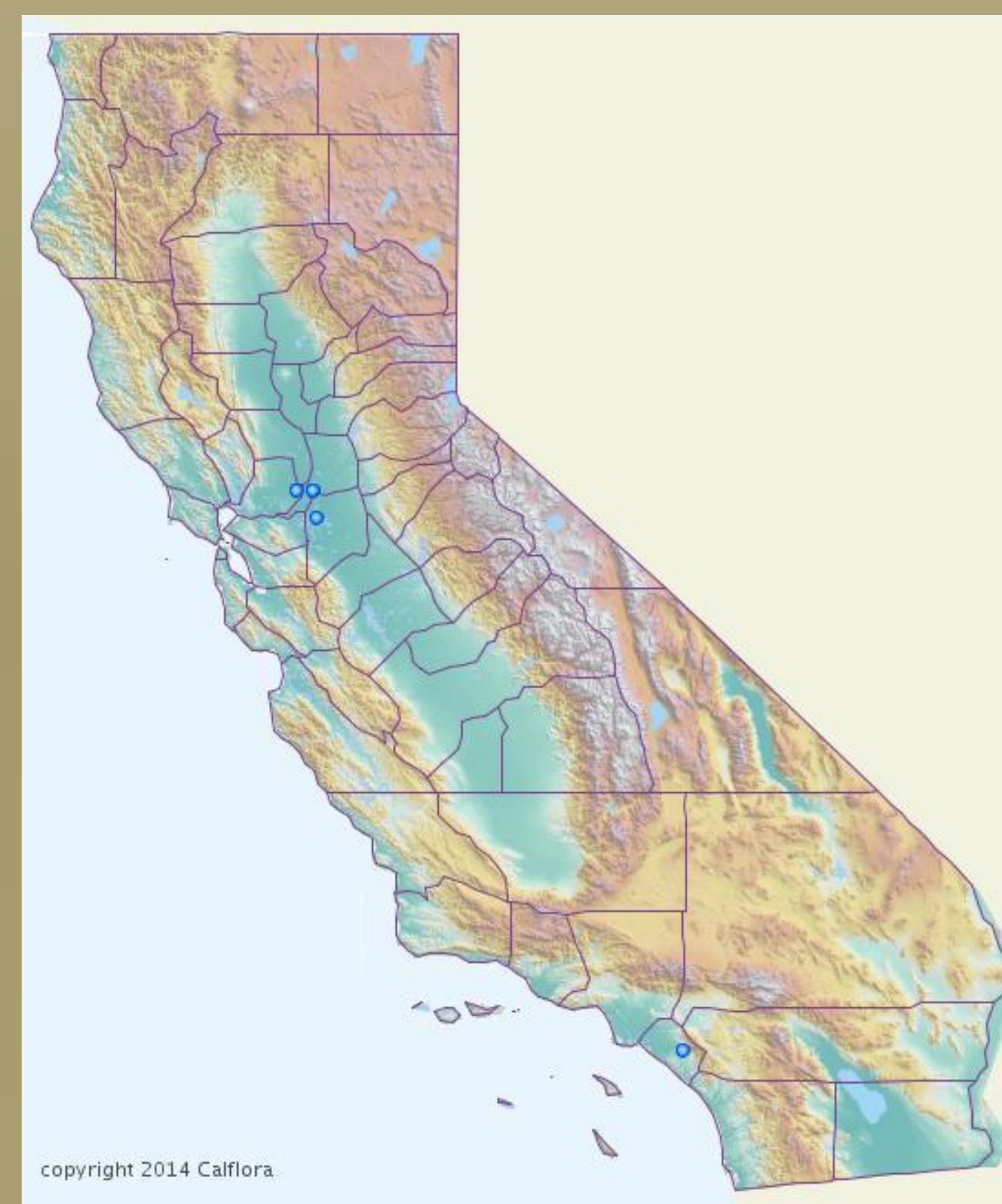
Taro Root (right) Can Be Confused with the Native Arrowroot (*Sagittaria* sp.) (left)

Taro Root Naturalized Distribution in California

After the original determination of taro root in early 2014 State Parks managers sent out a weed alert to other land managers in the Delta area and received a few more locations. In addition to Sacramento County, taro root has now been reported in Solano, San Joaquin and Orange counties. Lars Anderson, retired USDA aquatic weed scientist, reported it in Solano County, on Prospect Island in 2013. (*Calflora* location po230, exact location unverified)

Catherine Schmiedt, Division of Boating and Waterways, June 2014. Along edge of Disappointment Slough, west of Stockton, San Joaquin County. (*Calflora* location oe7143)

Ron Vanderhoff, Orange County, Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park, Foothill Ranch, August 2014. He notes "Plants to about 1 m with 4-5 leaves each. Appears to be spreading. Noticed in several moist sites in [this vicinity]." (*Calflora* location oe7345)



Statewide Taro Root Distribution, California, September 2014



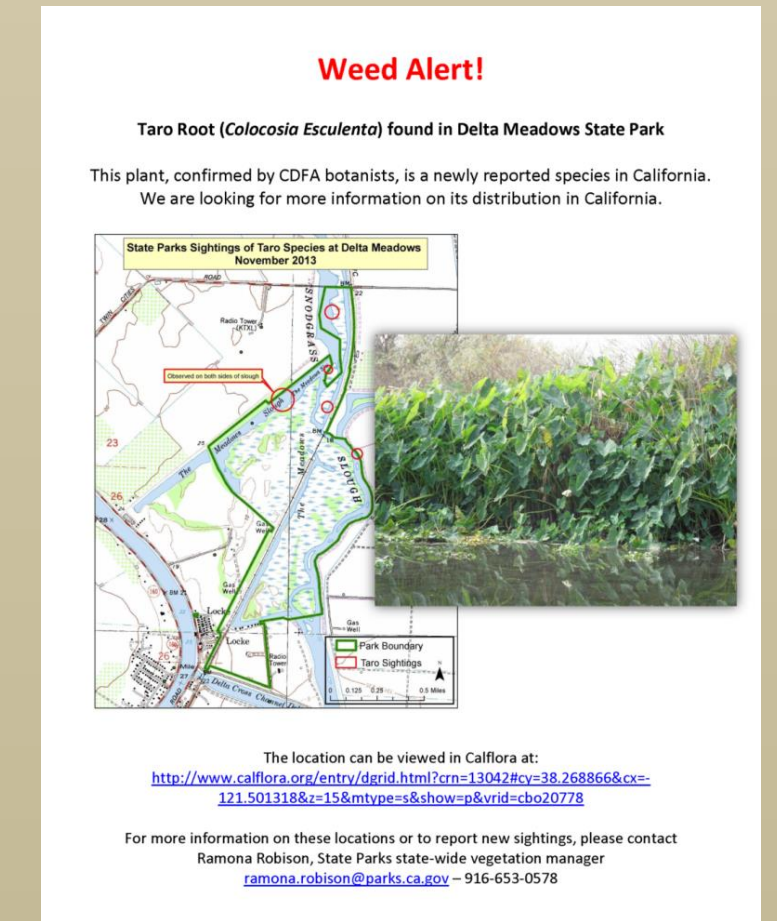
Taro Root Growing Ornamentally in Capitol Park, Sacramento



Orange County Taro Root



San Joaquin County Taro Root



Weed Alert Distributed in June 2014 by State Parks

Taro Root Production in California

Taro root is produced commercially in California, but at a small scale. According to Ruth Dahlquist-Willard, Small Farms and Specialty Crops Farm Advisor for Fresno and Tulare Counties, Fresno County had 11.8 acres in production in 2012 and 2013. Previously, in 2000, there were 20 acres in production on 3 farms in Fresno County (Molinar and Yang 2001). In Sacramento County, production areas are small, and mostly in the southern part of the County (Debbie Thompson, Sacramento County Agriculture Department, pers. comm.).



Edible Taro Root For Sale, Right Side of Bin



Taro Root Tubers

Uses of Taro Root

Taro produces a potato-like tuber that is similar to a potato and is used in the cuisine of many cultures. In addition to the use of taro root for food, it is also grown ornamentally.

Future Planning

We continue to look for more information on the distribution and treatment of this plant in California wildlands. Please contact the authors with any location or treatment information.

References

Richard Molinar and Michael Yang. 2001. Guide to Asian Specialty Vegetables in the Central Valley, CA. Available:

http://ucanr.edu/sites/Small_Farms_and_Specialty_Crop/files/88378.pdf

Acknowledgements

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