

Myriophyllum aquaticum

COMMON NAME

parrot's feather

FAMILY

Haloragaceae

AUTHORITY

Myriophyllum aquaticum (Vell. Conc.) Verdc.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

MYRAQU

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Sprawling emergent perennial herb with light grey-green foliage that is feathery in appearance (deeply divided). Submerged leaves are also finely divided and are often bright pink in colour.

DISTRIBUTION

Widely naturalised in the North Island (locally common in Auckland, Waikato, Wairarapa and Manawatu), rare but scattered throughout the South Island.

HABITAT

Typically invades disturbed, polluted, high nutrient, well lit, still or slow-moving waterbodies. Wetlands, water margins, streams, rivers, slightly saline estuary edges and river mouths.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Sprawling emergent perennial herb. Emergent leaves are a light grey-green, up to 3.5 cm long, and deeply divided (pinnate), giving them a feathery appearance. They are arranged in whorls of 4-6. The stem can be up to 2m long, but with only up to the top 10 cm emerging above water. Fibrous roots occur at the lower stem nodes. Submerged leaves are longer (up to 4 cm long, with filiform pinnae that are often bright pink in colour). Flowers in the axil of emergent whorls of leaves are white, tiny (up to 1.5mm across), with no petals. Only female flowers in New Zealand and other countries outside the native range.

SIMILAR TAXA

Very similar to 5 native *Myriophyllum* spp all have stems less than 1 m long (except the endangered *M. robustum*). *M. robustum* is the most similar, *M. robustum* is pointed at the leaf tip whereas *M. aquaticum* is rounded. May be confused with *Ceratophyllum demersum* but hornwort has forked rather than feathery foliage.

FLOWERING

September, October, November, December, January, February



Myriophyllum aquaticum. Photographer: Auckland Regional Council, Licence: Public domain.



Mawaihakona Stream, Upper Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 26/01/2008, Licence: CC BY.

FRUITING

No seed produced because only female plants in New Zealand.

LIFE CYCLE

Stem fragmentation and lateral stem growth. It does not produce viable seed in New Zealand, with only female flowers known to exist here. No seed produced because only female flowers.

Fragments are dispersed by wave action or mechanical harvesting.

YEAR NATURALISED

1970

ORIGIN

South America

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental aquarium and pond plant.

TOLERANCES

Can grow in fast-moving to still water; tolerant of occasional frosts and some salinity.

ETYMOLOGY

myriophyllum: Many leaves

NATIONAL PEST PLANT ACCORD SPECIES

This plant is listed in the 2020 National Pest Plant Accord. The National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) is an agreement to prevent the sale and/or distribution of specified pest plants where either formal or casual horticultural trade is the most significant way of spreading the plant in New Zealand. For up to date information and an electronic copy of the 2020 Pest Plant Accord manual (including plant information and images) visit the [MPI website](#).

ATTRIBUTION

Factsheet prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Champion et al (2012). Freshwater Pests of New Zealand. NIWA publication.

<http://www.niwa.co.nz/freshwater-and-estuaries/management-tools/identification-guides-and-fact-sheets/freshwater-pest-species>.

DiTomaso JM, EA Healy (2003). Aquatic and riparian weeds of the west. University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources Publication 3421, 462pp.

Johnson PN, Brooke PA (1989). Wetland plants in New Zealand. DSIR Field Guide, DSIR Publishing, Wellington. 319pp.

Popay et al (2010). An illustrated guide to common weeds of New Zealand, third edition. NZ Plant Protection Society Inc, 416pp.

WSDE (2001). An aquatic plant identification manual for Washington's freshwater plants. Washington State Department of Ecology, 195pp.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myriophyllum-aquaticum/>