

Parrot's Feather

Species Description

Scientific name: *Myriophyllum aquaticum*
AKA: Brazilian Watermilfoil and Myrdd-ddail (Welsh), *Myriophyllum brasiliense*, *Myriophyllum proserpinacoides*

Native to: Central and South America

Habitat: Still or slowly flowing water

Emergent growth, blue-green colour and feather-like leaves make this a distinctive water plant. Present year round. Unlikely to be found in fast flowing water.

Aquatic perennial, grows in emergent and submerged form. Both forms are similar in appearance. Most often found in nutrient rich waters. Grown in water gardens in UK since 1878, first recorded in the wild in 1960. Initial spread by improper disposal of garden and aquarium plants. Still found in some garden centres, often under one of its pseudonyms. Spreads by vegetative fragmentation, no seeds are produced in the UK.

Causes flooding by blocking watercourses and drainage channels. Can rapidly dominate a water body displacing native species.

Parrot's feather is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to England, Wales and Scotland. As such, it is an offence to plant or otherwise allow this species to grow in the wild.

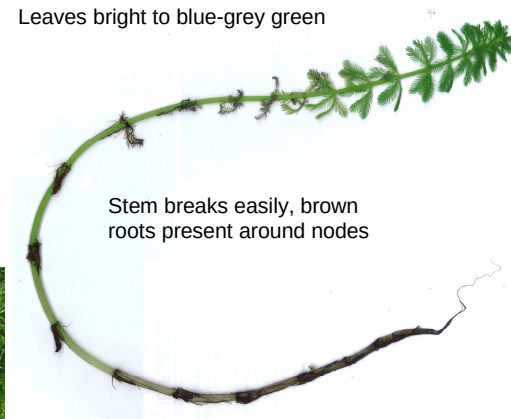
For details of legislation go to www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation.



Key ID Features

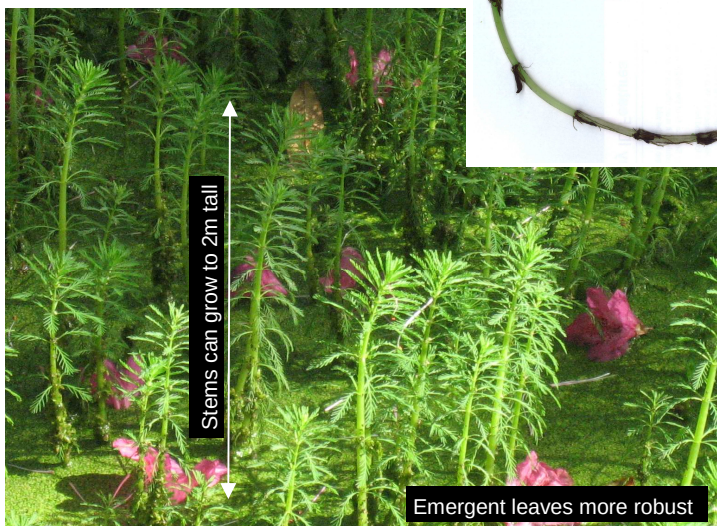
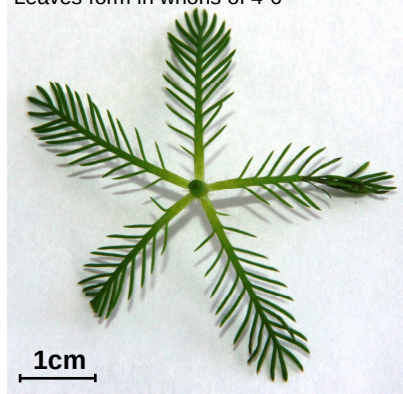
Changes form depending on the conditions, varying between submerged to emergent foliage. Both forms are similar in appearance. Emergent leaves are stiff, bright green and the most distinctive form. Submerged leaves are more fragile and, after death, decompose quickly.

Leaves bright to blue-grey green



Stem breaks easily, brown roots present around nodes

Leaves form in whorls of 4-6



Emergent leaves more robust

Forms inconspicuous flowers at base of leaves between May and August. Small (2mm) and white. Can be difficult to see.



Finely divided leaves, feather-like

Identification throughout the year

Dies down in winter, can be found submerged throughout the year. Emergent shoots appear in spring when the plant becomes more conspicuous. Blue-green colour of leaves is useful for identification. Flowers are present from May to August, but are inconspicuous.

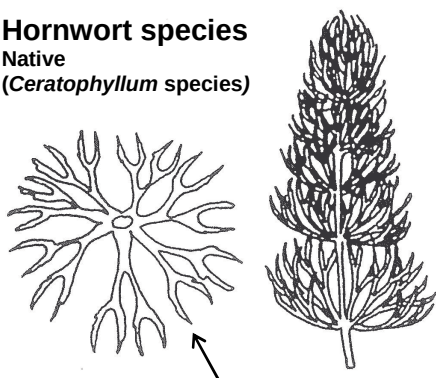
Similar Species

The emergent stems of parrot's feather distinguish it from native water-milfoil species (spiked water-milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum*, alternate water-milfoil *Myriophyllum alterniflorum* and whorled water-milfoil *Myriophyllum verticillatum*) which are never emergent, although the native species can produce short emergent flower spikes. Parrot's feather is also rarely, if ever, found in fast flowing water, unlike some native water-milfoil species. Submerged parrot's feather is difficult to distinguish from these species and expert assistance may be required.

Other species that can be confused with parrot's feather:

Hornwort species

Native
(*Ceratophyllum* species)

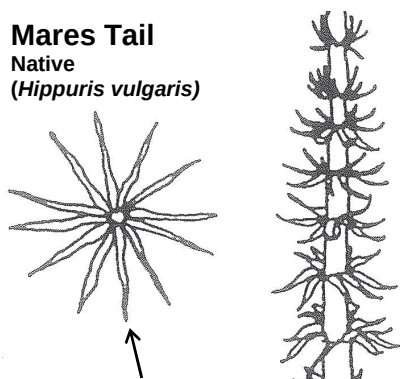


Leaves have 'tuning fork' ends

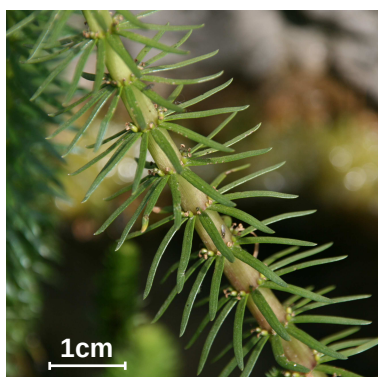


Mares Tail

Native
(*Hippuris vulgaris*)

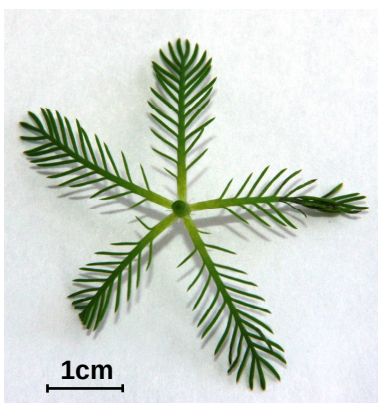


Leaves not divided



Parrot's Feather

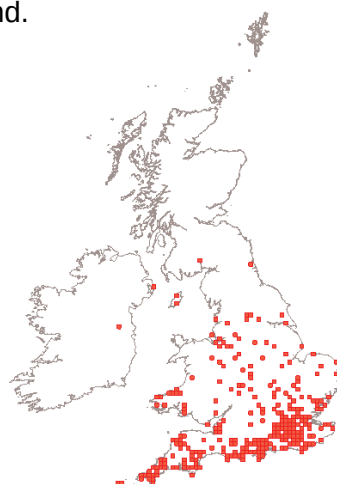
(and other *Myriophyllum* species)
For comparison



Distribution

Mainly a lowland plant. Widespread in south of England, spreading northwards. Rare in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Source: NBN Gateway. Check website for current distribution



Fanwort

Non-Native
(*Cabomba caroliniana*)

Floating leaves, when present, are linear and inconspicuous, with an alternate arrangement, submerged leaves are finely divided



Leaves in pairs up the stem (not in whorls)

References and further reading:

Blamey, M, Fitter, R and Fitter, A (2003) "The Wild Flowers of Britain and Ireland. The Complete Guide to the British and Irish Flora." A & C Black

Preston, C D and Croft, J M (1997) "Aquatic plants in Britain and Ireland". Harley Books

Preston, C D, Pearman, D A and Dines, T A (editors) (2002) "New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora". Oxford University Press

Stace, C (1999) "Field Flora of the British Isles". Cambridge University Press