

Parrots feather

Myriophyllum aquaticum

What does it look like?

Parrot's feather is a submerged, bottom-rooted perennial aquatic herb. The top 10cm of foliage can be emergent, standing above the water. Sprawling foliage is pale grey-green and stems are up to 2m long. Leaves are finely divided, feathery and arranged in whorls of 4-6. Emergent and submerged leaves differ in form. It flowers from September – February. Only female plants are present in New Zealand so no seed is set.

All nodes can take root and the plant forms mats in still or slow water or on damp ground. Prefers water that has high nutrient levels, high sediment levels (especially peat levels) and which is polluted, but tolerates damage, grazing, hot and cold temperatures and salt water at low levels. Will be found in still or slow moving water bodies including wetlands, lakes, streams, rivers, drains and ponds to a depth of approximately 5+m. Growth rates increase in response to increases in carbon dioxide. May benefit from climate change.

Why is it a problem?

History of invasiveness overseas. Within catchments it is spread by flowing water, and new catchments are infested by fragments spread by boats and trailers, eel nets, diggers, and people 'liberating' fish. Birds are unlikely to spread it.

Forms dense mats, shading out existing native species and preventing new seedlings of native species from establishing, and replaces species that usually grow on the margins of waterbodies. Large clumps dislodge, causing flooding, and rotting vegetation stagnates water, killing fauna and flora.



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Control Methods

Physical control

Rake up (Nov-Jan): Leave on site to rot down. away from water, and then follow up (Feb-Apr) by spraying any regrowth. Or,

Weedmat: Lay carefully to ensure fragments are not released, start at top of infestation, leave 3-4 months.

Lower water level, mechanically remove, use weedmat to cover the area or dry out thoroughly for 2-3 weeks.

Herbicide control

Spray terrestrial sites (spring-autumn): glyphosate (20ml/L + penetrant) spray 4 times over a 10 or more week programme.

Before you carry out any control work, make sure the plant you are targeting is not a valued native species. Plant trees adjacent to narrow waterbodies to create shade, create riparian strips, and remove pollution sources to prevent nutrient runoff.

CAUTION: When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and safety requirements are followed.

Related Links

Ministry for Primary Industries <http://apps.mpi.govt.nz/applications/nzpests-view/Article/620/Parrots-feather>

New Zealand Plant Conservation Network http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.aspx?ID=3214

NZ Flora <http://www.nzflora.info/factsheet/Taxon/Myriophyllum-aquaticum.html>

Unwanted Organisms Register https://www1.maf.govt.nz/uor-cgi/uor.pl/show?species_id=36707

NZ Freshwater Weed and Pest Visual Guide <https://www.thisisus.nz/assets/Resources/New-Zealand-freshwater-weed-and-pest-visual-guide.pdf>

Freshwater Invasive Species Guide 2020 https://niwa.co.nz/sites/default/files/Freshwater%20invasive%20species%20of%20New%20Zealand%202020_1.pdf

Weedbusters <https://www.weedbusters.org.nz/what-are-weeds/weed-list/parrots-feather/>

Check Clean Dry <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/biosecurity/exotic-pests-and-diseases-in-new-zealand/active-biosecurity-responses-to-pests-and-diseases/exotic-freshwater-clams-corbicula/stop-clams-from-spreading/>

Rules

Under Section 52 and 53 of the Biosecurity Act 1993 no person can sell, propagate, breed, distribute or otherwise spread any pest in a Pest Management Plan, or any unwanted organism. Not complying with Section 52 or 53 is an offence under the Act, and may result in penalties noted in Section 157(1).

The National Pest Plant Accord is designed to prevent the sale, distribution and propagation of a set list of pest plants (the Accord list) within New Zealand. If allowed to spread further, these pest plants could seriously damage the New Zealand economy and environment.