

Exotic Caulerpa

Caulerpaceae - *Caulerpa brachypus* and *Caulerpa parvifolia*



What does it look like?

Bright green seaweed with green fronds up to 10 centimetres long in the shape of oar blades that rise from long runners or roots known as stolons. Horizontal runners can reach up to nine meters, with many upright fronds.

They can be found growing below the tideline at between 2 metres and 35 metres deep and on both hard surfaces and in sandy areas. When established, exotic caulerpa can cover large areas of the seafloor in dense mats.

Why is it a problem?

Caulerpa seaweed can quickly spread and forms large underwater fields. It smothers other algae, seagrasses and invertebrate communities, thereby out-competing native species for food and light. This species also produces toxic compounds that are detrimental to other marine species.

Since exotic caulerpa was first found in the north of New Zealand in 2021, there has been a comprehensive effort by Biosecurity New Zealand and partners (mana whenua, regional councils, and the Department of Conservation) to understand the pest and its distribution, prevent it spreading, and explore ways to remove it. It is now a very large incursion, across many sites in the upper North Island, and the focus is on reducing impacts at specific locations. Refer to the MPI link below for the current situation and distribution.

Control methods

You must notify the Environment Southland or the Ministry for Primary Industries if you suspect the presence of this organism

You can help prevent the spread of marine pests by:

- Regularly cleaning your boat's hull – ideally keep fouling growth to no more than a light slime layer.
- Applying a thorough coating of antifouling paint and keep it in good condition.
- Ensure your hull is clean and free of fouling before you travel to a new area.
- Clean and dry any marine equipment (e.g. ropes, lines and pots) before using in a new area.
- Inspect areas on your boat that retain water for signs of marine life.
- Check for aquatic weeds tangled around anchors, trailers and other equipment.

Notify Council

If you have seen or suspect the presence of Exotic Caulerpa you must report the sighting to Environment Southland immediately.

Management programme

- Unwanted organism
- Notifiable organism

[Request info](#)

<https://eservices.es.govt.nz/online-services/new/BiosecurityRFS/step/1?Subject=MarinePest&Species=116>

[Report this Pest/Weed](#)

<https://eservices.es.govt.nz/online-services/new/BiosecurityIncident/step/1?Subject=MarinePest&Species=116>