

New Zealand Pygmyweed

Species Description

Scientific name: *Crassula helmsii*

AKA: *Tillaea aquatica*, Australian Swamp-stonecrop, Briweg Seland Newydd (Welsh), *Tilia recurva*

Native to: Australia and New Zealand

Habitat: Aquatic up to 3m deep in still or slow flowing water bodies or terrestrial around pond or lake margins

Can be submerged, emergent and terrestrial. Readily recognisable when growing at the edges of water bodies by its fleshy leaves. Submerged leaves are less easy to see and recognise. Reproduces from very small stem fragments but does not produce viable seed in the UK.

Introduced in 1911 as an oxygenating plant for ponds and, since the 1970s, has spread rapidly. Forms dense mats and can impede drainage, causing flooding. Displaces other aquatic plant species and reduces amenity use of the waterbody.

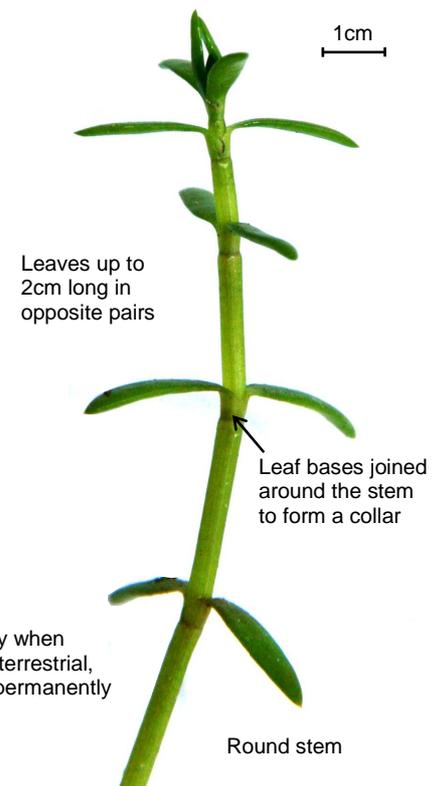
New Zealand pygmyweed is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to Scotland only. As such it is an offence to plant or otherwise cause this species to grow in the wild in Scotland.

For details of legislation relating to non-native species please see: http://www.nonnativespecies.org/07_Legislation.cfm



Key ID Features

Forms dense mats within the water body



Identification of terrestrial, emergent and submerged forms

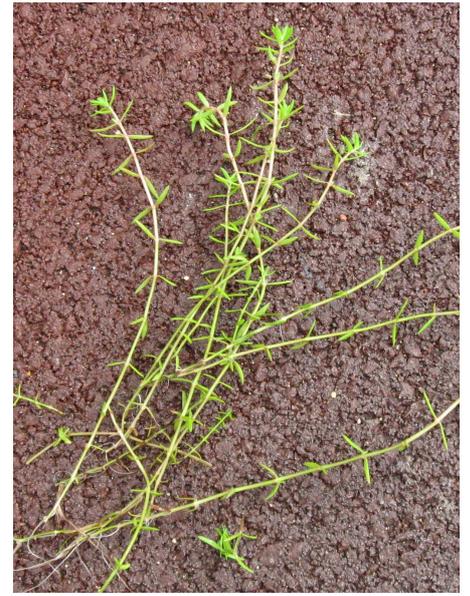
Terrestrial: growing away from the water's edge or left stranded as water level falls, creeping stems and aerial, fleshy leaves



Emergent: densely packed leaves in water, intermediate between terrestrial and submerged form (occurs in water <0.6m deep)



Submerged: elongated stems with leaves sparse and flat, able to form extensive mats on bed of the waterbody



Similar Species

A group of species known as water-starworts are most likely to be confused with New Zealand pygmyweed. Water-starworts are distinguished from New Zealand pygmyweed by their non-fleshy leaves, which are usually notched at the tip (hold up to light or use hand lens), and lack of collar at leaf base.

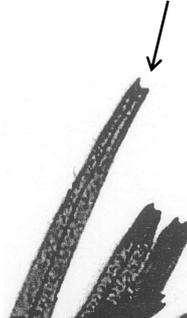
Water-starworts
Native
(*Callitriche* species)



Non-fleshy leaves

RL

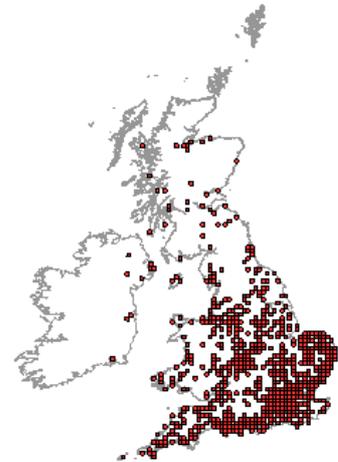
Water-starwort leaf with typically notched tip, a hand lens is usually required to see this properly



Distribution

Widespread in England and Wales. Spreading northwards, though much less common in Scotland. Very common in the south-east of England.

Source: NBN Gateway. Check website for current distribution



New Zealand Pygmyweed
For comparison



New Zealand pygmyweed collar around stem at base of leaves

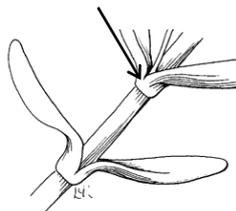


Illustration from IFAS, Centre for Aquatic Plants, University of Florida, Gainesville 1990

Fleshy leaves without notched tips

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