

Hornwort

(Ceratophyllum demersum)

Is Hornwort on your property?

Hornwort is included in Horizon's Regional Pest Plant Management Strategy as a Containment aquatic pest plant. This means that the plant is already in the region but further spread needs to be checked. The most effective way to manage aquatic plants is to control the dispersal pathways. If you see any sites where it is growing or can help with details of the plant, please contact us on free phone 0508 800 800.



Photo courtesy of NIWA

Identification

Perennial submerged, free-floating or anchored in water to 14 metres deep. Hornwort has no roots and is lightly anchored by buried stems and leaves. Stems are stiff and brittle and characteristically float or are submerged. Leaves in whorls of 7-12, densely crowded at stem apex and increasingly space down stem. Dark green coloured stems are thin, 1-4 cm long, equally forked once or twice into stiff tapering segments with teeth on the outer edge. Flowers are minute and green or white.

Weedy characteristics

Fragmented stems establish new plants. These invade bodies of water with varying clarity, temperature, light and nutrient level. With moderate to rapid growth rate, its dense habit crowds out native species. However it lacks native plant competitors of similar height.

Methods of dispersal

New catchments contaminated by diggers, boats and eel nets and other water based equipment such as sports gear.

Impact on indigenous plants

Prevents recruitment by forming dense beds to shade out smaller native species. This can contribute to blockage and flooding of catchments. Rotting vegetation stagnates water, killing fauna and flora. Is a threat to most submerged plant communities.

Typical habitats

Still or slow-moving waterbodies or lagoons. Hornwort has potential to disperse throughout New Zealand.

Control

1. Bottom lining. Lay carefully to ensure fragments are not released.
2. Lower water level where possible, use bottom lining.
3. Suction dredging. Work methodically from furthest point upstream to trap all fragments, ensure collection bags do not leak. Mulch.
4. Moderately susceptible to diquat herbicide. Requires consent.
5. Grass carp: requires consent, refer to Department of Conservation policy.

Site management

Eradication is almost impossible. Control is only possible where there is recent establishment. Thoroughly survey adjacent waterbodies first. In narrow waterbodies manipulate the plant's growing conditions by reducing light to make it less competitive. For example plant trees to create shade.

Species recovery

Broken fragments resprout strongly.

For more information freephone 0508 800 800.

