

Parrots feather

(*Myriophyllum aquaticum*)

Is Parrots feather on your property?

Parrots feather is included in Horizon's Regional Pest Plant Management Strategy as a Site-led plant. This means the plant is widespread throughout the region and will only be controlled in and around significant high-value natural areas or other sites that are deemed to be at risk. However 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 bottom-rooted, floating and emergent. Blue-green in colour. Roots fibrous. Stems 5mm diameter, rooting at lower nodes to 2m long (3-4m in flowing water), emerging 10cm above water, submerged parts becoming bare. Leaves in whorls of 5-6, each divided into 25-30 leaflets 7mm long (feather-like). Flowers minute, female only, September-February. No seed produced in New Zealand.

Weedy characteristics

All nodes can root. Prefers high nutrient, sediment (especially peaty), and polluted water. Mat-forming in still or slow water, damp ground. Very tolerant to damage, grazing, hot-cool and low saline levels.

Methods of dispersal

Spread within catchments via water flow, elsewhere by diggers, boats and eel nets.

Impact on indigenous plants

Forms dense mats, shading out native species, preventing recruitment. Replaces marginal species. Large clumps dislodge, causing flooding. Rotting vegetation stagnates water, killing fauna and flora.

Typical habitats

Disturbed, polluted, high nutrient, well lit, still or slow-moving waterbodies. Wetlands, water margins, streams, rivers, slightly saline estuary edges and river mouths.

Control

1. Rake up and dispose, November-January, follow-up February-April. Spray marginal regrowth.
2. Weedmat: lay carefully to ensure fragments are not released, start at top of infestation, and leave 3-4 months.
3. Spray terrestrial sites: Escort at gorse rates + penetrant. Spring-autumn.
4. Lower water level, mechanically remove, use weedmat or dry out thoroughly for 2-3 weeks.
5. Suction removal. Mulch. Generally not recommended in large still waterbodies as high chance of fragments spreading. If used, work methodically from top of infestation to trap all fragments, ensure collection bags do not leak. Water flow can assist to shift infestation boundary downstream.

Site management

Establish that plant is not a valued native species. Control is difficult as stem fragments resprout on banks and damp places, reinfesting waterways. Better in most situations to manipulate the plants growing conditions by reducing nutrient and light, making it less competitive. Adjacent to narrow waterbodies, plant trees to create shade. Prevent nutrient runoff (create riparian strips, remove pollution source).

Species recovery

Stems fragments resprout, especially on damp margins.

For more information freephone 0508 800 800.

