

African curly waterweed

Lagarosiphon major

Invasive: High impact

Species profile

- Habitat:** Freshwater.
- Distribution in Ireland:** Localised distribution (currently recorded for 8 counties in Ireland) in the wild but with many occurrences in artificial waterbodies. Largest natural invaded area in Ireland is Lough Corrib, Co. Galway where a control programme is in place.
- Status:** Established.
- Family name:** Hydrocharitaceae.
- Reproduction:** Can reproduce through fragmentation of vegetation.

Identifying features

- Colour:** Mainly green, slight yellow tinge from the underside.
- Leaves:** Turn back on themselves giving a "curly" appearance.
- Area:** The species occupies the entire water column.
- Stems:** Are fragile and can be easily broken by natural means, which aids dispersal.



African curly waterweed in abundance in a waterbody
© Colette O' Flynn



Close up of curled leaves and brittle stem
© RPS Group GBNNSS



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Threats

In high densities it blocks light from penetrating the water leading to a disturbance in the food web and a decrease in biodiversity.

It interferes with commercial navigation and water-based recreation.

It has a negative impact on some native fish species.

Native macroinvertebrate community structures are altered.

Similar species

May be confused with the non-native Nuttall's waterweed (*Elodea nuttallii*), the widespread Canadian waterweed (*Elodea canadensis*) and with Brazilian waterweed (*Egeria densa*) although the latter has only been recorded at one site in the wild in Ireland.



The plant is long and occupies the entire water
© O. Duffy



African curly waterweed can be confused with Canadian waterweed (*Elodea canadensis*)
- © GBNNSS



Clump of the African curly waterweed showing its curly leaves and white thread like roots
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