

New Zealand pigmyweed

Crassula helmsii

Invasive: High impact

Species profile

- Habitat:** Freshwater.
- Distribution in Ireland:** Very localised distribution in the wild but with many occurrences in artificial waterbodies.
- Status:** Established.
- Family name:** Crassulaceae.
- Reproduction:** Seeds can be produced but reproduction usually takes place through fragments, tiny individual plant nodes are capable of producing a new viable individual.

Identifying features

- Colour:** Green.
- Mat forming:** Singular plants form dense mats.
- Stem:** Rigid and round.
- Leaves:** Up to 2cm long and in opposite linear pairs. Leaf bases joined around the stem to form a collar. Leaves fleshy when emergent and flatter when permanently submerged.
- Flower:** Very small with 4 whitish petals, flowers are often absent.



New Zealand pigmyweed in flower with succulent leaves that form a collar on the stem. - GBNNSS Crown © 2009



New Zealand pigmyweed showing its dense mat like structure - GBNNSS Crown © 2009



New Zealand pigmyweed in flower - C. Hurley



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Threats

Forms thick dense mats which can float or be submerged.

The thick mats cause shading of existing water plants and the depletion of oxygen in the water, which leads to a reduction of native flora and fauna.

Possible health hazard, as the thick mats can be mistaken for dry land.

The species can move onto a terrestrial habitat after it colonises an aquatic area. Can obstruct boats and reduce the opportunities where fishing can take place, which may impact upon local economies.



New Zealand pigmyweed invading and matting the surface on the edges of a pond in Ireland - C. Hurley



New Zealand pigmyweed may be confused with *Callitriche* species which have notched leaf tips. - © www.aphotoflora.com

Similar species

Most similar to native water-starwort (*Callitriche*) species. However, the water-starworts do not have fleshy leaves and they are typically notched at the leaf tip. Notching may not be visible to the naked eye but should be with a hand lens.



New Zealand pigmyweed can be confused with *Callitriche* species - © www.aphotoflora.com



Showing the variation in the plants structure and form based on its habitat. Far left - terrestrial, middle - emergent, far right - submerged
- © GBNNS

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



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View Ireland's distribution of this
species on <http://maps.biodiversityireland.ie>

National Biodiversity Data Centre fact sheet.
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