



Ceratophyllum demersum

Common Name(s):

hornwort, coontail

Current Threat Status (2009):

Exotic

Distribution:

Widely naturalised and rapidly spreading in North Island, only known from near Motueka and Timaru in the South Island, sites have been targeted for eradication with no plants seen since 2008.

Habitat:

Moderate flowing to still water bodies, growing to >15 m deep in some clear water lakes.

Features*:

Submerged, rootless aquatic perennial, which anchors in sediment by buried leaves and stems. Stems are generally around 1.5 m but can be as long as 6 m. They are brittle, and easily broken by wave action. Hornwort has a very delicate appearance. Leaves are whorled and 10-40mm long. The leaves fork once or more into linear segments which are toothed (the teeth look like tiny horns – hence the name hornwort, wort being old English for plant). Leaves are most dense at the tip of the stem, becoming sparser near the base. Flowers are minute and occur singly at the base of the leaves, green if female, or whitish if male. Fruits are black oval nuts 5 mm long, with one spine at the tip and two spines at the base. Hornwort has no roots, instead its lower leaves anchor it to sediment. It can survive as a free floating mat absorbing all the nutrients it needs from the surrounding water.

Flowering:

summer - autumn

Fruiting:

No evidence that seed is set in NZ.

***Attribution:**

Factsheet prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA).

References and further reading:

Champion et al (2012). Freshwater Pests of New Zealand. NIWA publication.

<http://www.niwa.co.nz/freshwater-and-estuaries/management-tools/identification-guides-and-factsheets/freshwater-pest-species>.

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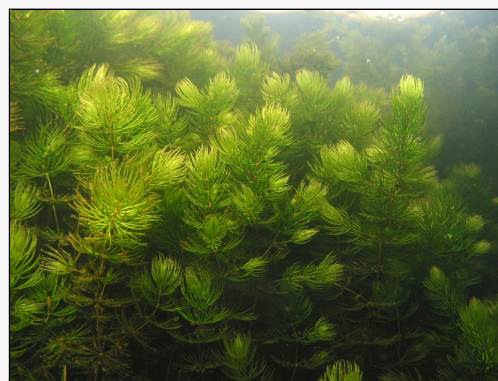
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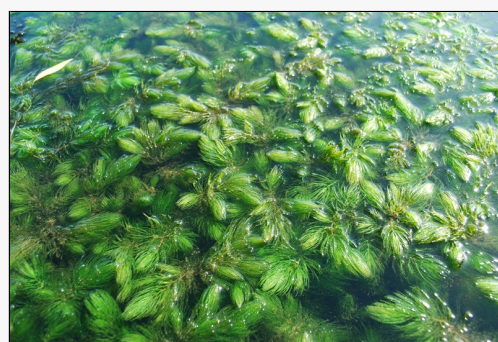
For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=3666



Caption: Weed bed underwater

Photographer: Rohan Wells, NIWA



Caption: Weed bed surface

Photographer: Rohan Wells, NIWA