

Hornwort

Ceratophyllum demersum

Family Ceratophyllaceae



Identification

- Submerged, free-floating or anchored aquatic weed growing in depths to 16m. It has no true roots, but may be attached to the ground.
- Leaves are brittle, dark green, dividing evenly into two segments, one or two times for each leaf. The segments are linear with toothed edges.
- The leaves are arranged in whorls (groups) of 7 – 12 along the stems.
- Flowers are very small, green to white in colour, located where the leaves join the stems.
- No seed is produced in New Zealand.



Hornwort invading a stream. Photo: M. Newfield.



Photo: R. Wells (NIWA).

Photo: K. McCombs.

Why is it a problem?

Hornwort is spread by stem fragments so is easily transported to other waterways by boats, nets and machinery. It forms very dense masses of aquatic vegetation, crowding out native species and contributing to flooding and blockages. Rotting vegetation stagnates water, killing flora and fauna.

Where is it a problem?

Hornwort is abundant in the Waikato River system and Rotorua lakes. It is present from Northland to Wellington. So far it has been found at only a few sites at the top of the South Island. It has not yet been found in Canterbury.

Status

An unwanted organism, hornwort cannot be sold, propagated or distributed within New Zealand. To report sightings of hornwort, please contact either the Potential Pest Line (03)3639380 or weeds@ecan.govt.nz



Hornwort growing in Lake Karapiro in the North Island. Photo: K. McCombs.