

Curly Waterweed

Species Description

Scientific name: *Lagarosiphon major*

AKA: Curly Water-thyme, Chwyn dŵr Cyrliog (Welsh), *Elodea crispata*

Native to: Southern Africa

Habitat: Standing waters such as lakes and

A perennial, aquatic plant which can grow up to 3 m completely submerged under the water in chalk, gravel and clay pits, lakes, reservoirs and canals. Leaves are strongly curved and whorled around the stem though are spirally arranged on the lower part of stem. Flowers are inconspicuous and borne separately as male and female flowers. Plants spread mainly by vegetative propagation through detached stem fragments and can become easily established.

First recorded in Britain in 1944 in a chalk pit in Bedfordshire, where it persisted for at least 40 years. Since the mid-1900s, it has been recorded in many locations and is now well-established at many sites.

It is widely sold as an aquarium and garden pond plant and the UK population is most likely due to deliberate or accidental release. Like many nuisance aquatic plants, curly waterweed can overwhelm ponds and out-compete native vegetation as well as choke up waterways, exacerbating flood risk.

Curly waterweed is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to England, Wales and Scotland. As such, it is an offence to plant or otherwise allow this species to grow in the wild.

For details of legislation go to www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation.



Key ID Features



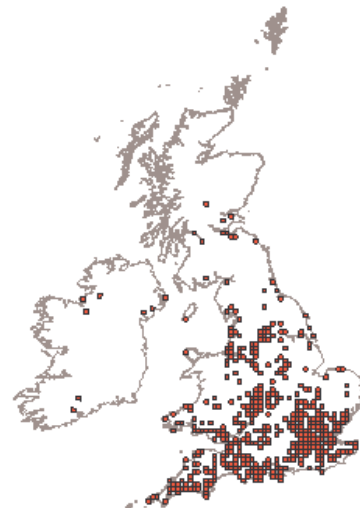
Identification throughout the year

Survives over-winter in southern areas of the UK. Further north, the amount of plant material present over-winter decreases but rarely dies down completely. Therefore it can usually be identified throughout the year across most of the UK.

Distribution

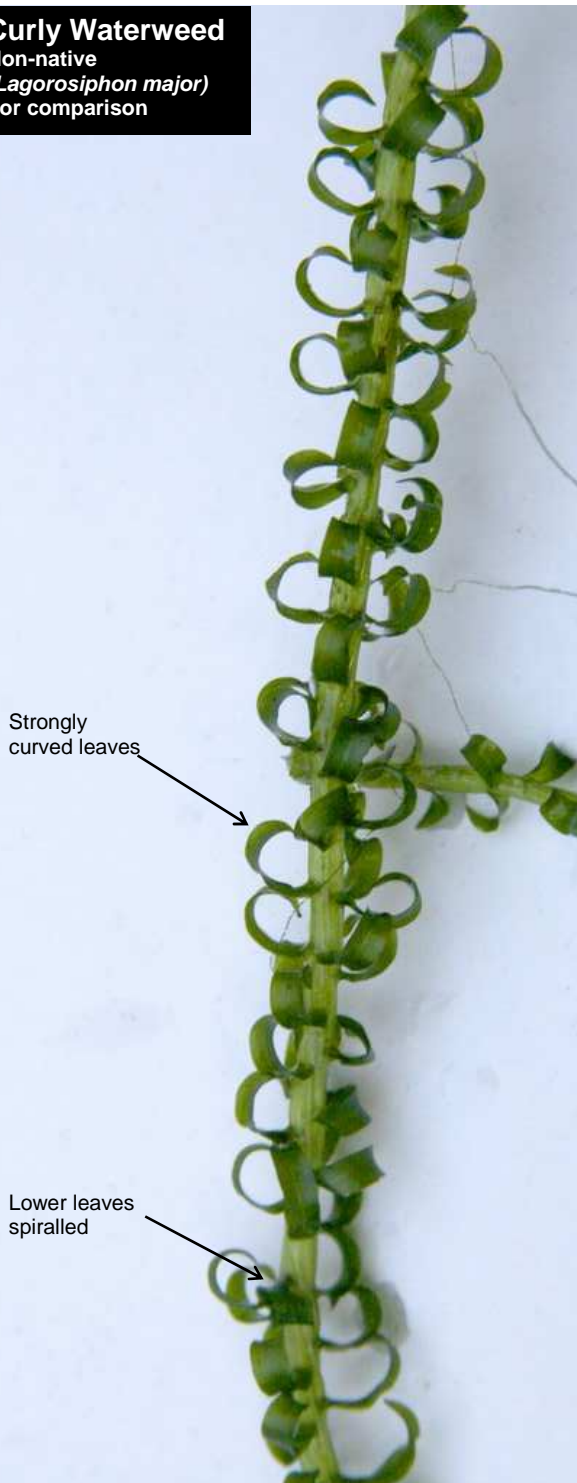
Widespread through lowland England.

Source: NBN Gateway. Check website for current distribution



Similar Species

Curly Waterweed
Non-native
(*Lagorosiphon major*)
For comparison



Strongly curved leaves

Lower leaves spiralled

Waterweed species
Non-native
(*Elodea* species)



Leaves not curled or, if so, only weakly

Upper and lower leaves whorled

References and further reading:

<http://www.nerc-wallingford.ac.uk/research/capm/pdf%20files/23%20Lagorosiphon%20major.pdf>

Preston, C D and Croft, J M (1997) "*Aquatic plants in Britain and Ireland*". Harley Books

Preston, C D, Pearman, D A and Dines, T A (editors) (2002) "*New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora*". Oxford University Press

Stace, C (1999) "*Field Flora of the British Isles*". Cambridge University Press