

# Canadian and Nuttall's Waterweeds

Scan for more  
Information



## Species Description

**Scientific name:** *Elodea* species

**Native to:** North America

**Habitat:** Still or slow-flowing, shallow or deep water

There are two invasive non-native species of Waterweed *Elodea* species in Northern Ireland; Canadian waterweed *Elodea canadensis* and Nuttall's waterweed *Elodea nuttallii*. Both are aquatic, submerged (apart from tiny white flowers borne on very long thread-like stalks just above the water surface) growing up to 3 m in length, perennial and only reproduce vegetatively in Northern Ireland as all plants are female.

Canadian waterweed, first recorded in Ireland in 1836, has subsequently spread rapidly and is now found commonly. It has disappeared from some areas, often being replaced by Nuttall's waterweed. Nuttall's waterweed is found in more nutrient-rich water than Canadian waterweed. It is less common than Canadian waterweed.

It is difficult to distinguish between these two species. Dense growth of these waterweeds in slow flowing rivers, drainage channels and canals can impede flow and exacerbate flooding. It can also replace native aquatic plant species and reduce biodiversity in lakes and ponds and interfere with recreational activities such as angling and boating.

**Under the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019 it is offence to intentionally keep; grow or cultivate; transport to, from or within Northern Ireland, use or exchange Nuttall's waterweed; or to release it into the environment.**



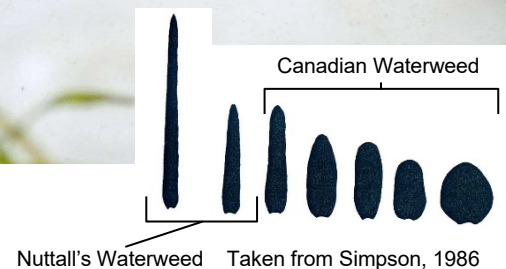
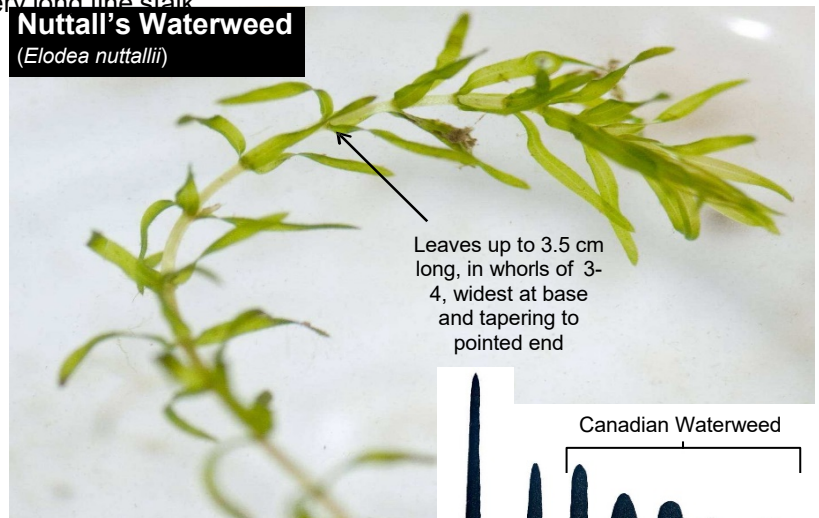
## Key ID Features

Flowers are small and inconspicuous and petals white or white tinged with red and borne on end of very long fine stalk

**Canadian Waterweed**  
(*Elodea canadensis*)



**Nuttall's Waterweed**  
(*Elodea nuttallii*)



Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>, iRecord app or Invasive Species Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/report-sighting>

## Identification throughout the year

Canadian waterweed and Nuttall's waterweed are both perennial and are present throughout the year, though they can die back in winter. Tiny flowers are produced June to September.

## Similar Species

### Curly Waterweed

Invasive non-native  
(*Lagarosiphon major*)



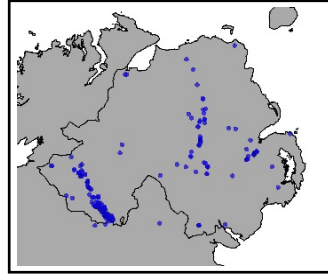
Lower leaves spiralled at base, not in whorls.  
Leaves to 3cm long.

Flowers inconspicuous with reddish petals

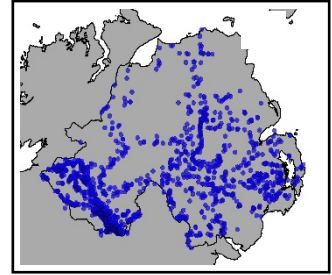
## Distribution

Widespread throughout Northern Ireland

Nuttall's waterweed



Canadian waterweed



Source: NBN atlas Northern Ireland

<https://northernireland-species.nbnatlas.org/search/?q=elodea>

Check website for current distribution

### Large-flowered Waterweed

Invasive non-native  
(*Egeria densa*)

Flowers white, to 2cm across, with 3 petals

Much larger in size with small teeth along central vein

Leaves in whorls of 4-5, to 3 cm long toothed edge



### References and further reading:

Lansdown, R V (2008) "A field guide to the riverine plants of Britain and Northern Ireland". Environment Agency

Preston *et al.* (2002) "New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora". Oxford University Press

Simpson, D A (1986) "Taxonomy of *Elodea Michx* in the British Isles" *Watsonia* **16** 1-14

Stace, C (1997) "New Flora of the British Isles".

Photos from: British Waterways, Dancingtodawn@Flickr, Kevin Doidge, Joanne Denyer, Danial Winchester.

Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

Adapted for Northern Ireland  
Environment Agency 2020