

New Zealand Pigmyweed

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Species Description

Scientific name: *Crassula helmsii*

AKA: *Tillaea aquatica*, Australian Swamp-stonecrop, *Tillaea recurva*

Native to: Australia and New Zealand

Habitat: Aquatic up to 3m deep in still or slow flowing water bodies or terrestrial around pond or lake margins

Can be submerged, emergent and terrestrial. Readily recognisable when growing at the edges of water bodies by its fleshy leaves. Submerged leaves are less easy to see and recognise. Reproduces from very small stem fragments but does not produce viable seed in Ireland or the UK.

Introduced as an oxygenating plant for garden ponds. It is possible that the species was disposed of or escaped into the wild from private gardens. Secondary spread by animals and human activity from an infested site to new sites may occur.

Forms dense mats and can impede drainage, causing flooding. Displaces other aquatic plant species and reduces amenity use of the waterbody.

***Crassula helmsii* is listed on Schedule 9 of The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and as such, it is an offence to plant or other-wise allow this species to grow in the wild.**



Key ID Features

Forms dense mats within the water body

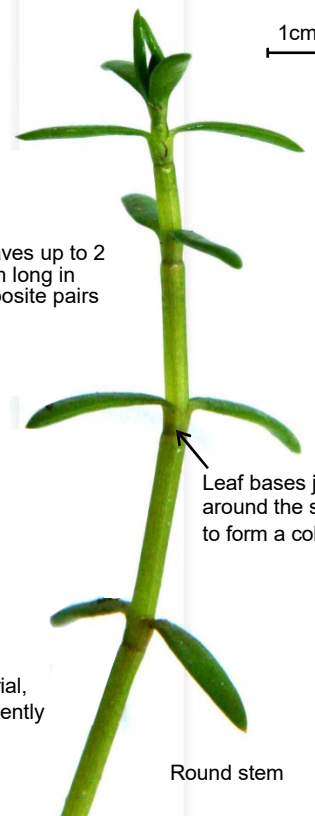


Flowers very small, often absent, whitish-green to slightly pink



Flowers have 4 petals

Leaves up to 2cm long in opposite pairs



Leaf bases joined around the stem to form a collar

Leaves fleshy when emergent or terrestrial, flatter when permanently submerged

Round stem

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

Identification of terrestrial, emergent and submerged forms

Terrestrial: Growing away from the water's edge or left stranded as water level falls, creeping stems and aerial, fleshy leaves.



Emergent: Densely packed leaves in water, intermediate between terrestrial and submerged form (occurs in water <0.6m deep).



Submerged: Elongated stems with leaves sparse and flat, able to form extensive mats on bed of the water body.



Similar Species

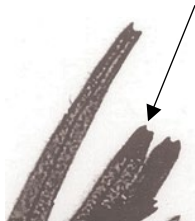
A group of species known as water-starworts are most likely to be confused with New Zealand pigmyweed. Water-starworts are distinguished from New Zealand pigmyweed by their non-fleshy leaves, which are usually notched at the tip (hold up to light or use hand lens), and lack of collar at leaf base.

Water-starworts
Native
(*Callitriche* species)



Non-fleshy leaves

Water-starwort leaf with typically notched tip, a hand lens is usually required to see this properly



New Zealand pigmyweed
For comparison



Collar around stem at base of leaves

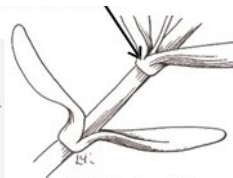
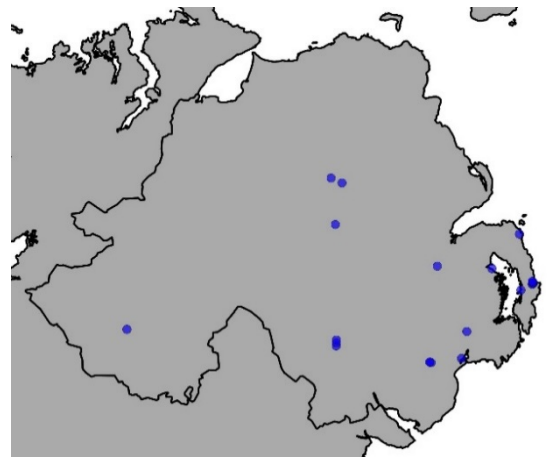


Illustration from IFAS, Centre for Aquatic Plants, University of Florida, Gainesville 1990

Fleshy leaves without notched tips

Distribution

Records are spread across Northern Ireland



Source: NBN atlas Northern Ireland

<https://northernireland-species.nbnatlas.org/species/NBNSYS0000004639>

Check website for current distribution

References and further reading:

Blamey, M, Fitter, R and Fitter, A (2003) "*The Wild Flowers of Britain and Ireland. The Complete Guide to the British and Irish Flora.*" A & C Black
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
Photos from: Olaf Booy, Richard Lansdown (RL), Peter Llewellyn, Max Wade.

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

Adapted for Northern Ireland
Environment Agency 2020