

Parrot feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*)



Parrot feather is a long-lived freshwater semi-submerged aquatic herb with feathery, blue-green leaves that forms tangled mats. It is a declared weed under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*.

Description

Stems are spreading, erect and hairless. Stems can grow to 2-5m long. Stems can emerge up to 30cm above the water surface. Leaves are arranged in a fern-like whorl pattern. The bluish green to pale green leaves are usually arranged in groups of 5 or 6 along the stem. Leaves are deeply divided margins and a feathery in appearance.

The perennial herb can live longer than 2 years. It grows rapidly in summer, slows in winter and starts growing again in spring. Similar looking species include ambusias (*Limnophila* spp.) (native), cabomba (*Cabomba caroliniana*) (introduced) and other *Myriophyllum* species.

Impacts

Parrot feather invades still, shallow water (such as dams, ponds) and slow-moving water. It can form dense mats, hindering water flow and altering natural habitats. It can be found in nutrient-rich waters and can tolerate slightly brackish water. It can also be found in canals, drains and saturated soils.

It spreads in fragments. Male and female flowers are produced on separate plants. Only female plants have been found in Australia; therefore, seed is not produced in Australia. The stems are fragile and fragments can be broken off by water movement, boats, vehicles animals and can be spread long distances by people dumping aquarium material in waterways.

Distribution

Parrot feather is native to South America and is naturalized and widespread around the world. It was introduced to Australia as an aquarium plant and has 'escaped' into water stands via dumping. It occurs in coastal areas in eastern and southern Australia. In the Hills and Fleurieu region, its only known location is in Nairne, South Australia.

Hygiene practices

There are a number of hygiene practices that can help prevent the spread of Parrot Feather:

- avoid working in infested areas (except for control work)
- avoid running boat motors or paddling through water plants
- check and remove all plant material from equipment and vehicles (boats)
- do not remove plants from infested areas
- prevent nutrient-rich runoff from entering waterways
- never dump unwanted water plants (except or at approved dumps)

Control methods

Parrot feather can be removed from waterways or bodies by physically removing it from the water. However, physical removal should be careful to remove all parts and fragments, as fragments can flow downstream and form roots. Control can occur anytime.

What to do

If you suspect that you have Parrot feather, please email photos to Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu for identification. This is a free service and they will also provide you with information on current control techniques.

Declarations

The following sections of the *Landscape SA Act* apply to African Feathergrass in the Hills and Fleurieu region:

- 186(2) Cannot transport the plant or anything carrying it
- 188(1) Cannot sell the plant
- 188(2) Cannot sell any produce / goods carrying the plant
- 192(2) Landowner must control the plant on their land

Further information

Further information is available through Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu

Mount Barker Office:

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