

All Choked Up - Prevent Pond Pests

A Water for Wildlife campaign against aquatic invasive plant species

Information Sheet April 2005

Why is there a problem?

Exotic aquatic plant species, are often sold in local nurseries, pet centres and aquarium centres, are usually purchased by the general public for their own gardens and ponds.

While the majority of these exotic species are not a problem, since they are not able to live in the UK outside of gardens or highly sheltered environments, some species that have escaped into the wild have become pests in the wider environment. These species are known 'aquatic invasive' species.

From people's gardens, it is impossible to prevent the spread of these invasive species into the wider environment. Visiting garden birds for instance, only have to pick up small fragments of these plants on their feet to transmit them to other areas.

Once in the wild, these aquatic invasive plants cause havoc in our rivers, lakes and ponds and other waterways. With no natural predators and benign climates, they grow rapidly to nuisance proportions, blocking out and shading the riverbed, out-competing and taking over from native plants species, killing life on waterway beds. They can clog up water treatment works and can also pose a flood risk.

Even starting as just a small fragment, these plants can grow to cover whole areas of water in a matter of months and are extremely hard to eradicate, requiring applications of herbicide or expensive mechanical removal and causing millions of pounds worth of damage. For instance, floating pennywort can form a mat in one season, and individual stems can grow up to 20cm in a day.



Floating Pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides* blocking a waterway



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Which species have been identified as a problem?

The main aquatic plants that have been identified as invasive pond pests for this campaign are:

Common name	Latin name
Parrot's feather	<i>Myriophyllum aquaticum</i> , <i>Myriophyllum proserpinacoides</i> or <i>Myriophyllum brasiliense</i>
Floating pennywort	<i>Hydrocotyle ranunculoides</i>
Australian swamp stonecrop (also known as New Zealand Pigmyweed)	<i>Crassula helmsii</i> or <i>Tillea recurva</i>
Water fern	<i>Azolla filiculoides</i>
Curly waterweed	<i>Lagarosiphon major</i>
Water primrose	<i>Ludwigia grandiflora</i> aka <i>Jussiaea</i>
Water hyacinth	<i>Eichornia crassipes</i>
Water lettuce	<i>Pistia stratiotes</i>

It is important to know both names because, they may only be identified by their common names or Latin name or vice versa.

What about the law?

Duckweed blocking a waterway



The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 makes it an offence to plant or otherwise cause to grow certain invasive plant species. Defra is committed to an early review of the list of these plants, and it is hoped that a public consultation on proposed additions will be carried out next year, which could include invasive aquatic plant species.

In addition, Defra recently published a public consultation on the review of Part I of the 1981 Act, which contained a number of proposals aimed at preventing the spread of invasive species in the wild. Two of these measures have been included in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill

currently before Parliament. Should these become law, it will be an offence to sell certain invasive non-native plants. The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 creates a new offence

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to sell certain plants, and will consult on the species this applies to shortly. The Act has also updated schedule 9, those plants that it is illegal to allow to grow in the wild. These include most of the aquatic invasives listed here.

What can you do?

As a member of the general public

1. Since these plants are so difficult to control and eradicate in the wild, it is important to prevent them getting into our rivers and other waterways to begin with. The main way members of the general public can help therefore is **not to buy these aquatic invasive plant species** in the first place. Instead, buy and use native species that will do the same job and not cause a problem. A list of water friendly native plants is provided on page 5 below.
2. Look out for small fragments of these plants, caught up within other plants you might buy. A small fragment is all that is required
3. If you already have these plants in your pond or aquarium, dispose of them. However, remember that plants can spread from tiny fragments, so make sure you compost, bury or burn all pieces of plants. **DO NOT PUT THEM DOWN THE DRAIN OR IN THE RUBBISH.** If composting, ensure that the compost gets hot enough to destroy all seeds and spores. Do not transfer any plants, frogspawn or anything else between ponds as this may spread these invasive plants.
4. Sign the Water for Wildlife pledge and petition to prevent pond pests on The Wildlife Trusts' website at www.wildlifetrusts.org
5. If you see these species on sale, alert the provider to the dangers they cause and ask them to display the postcards and / or poster provided by the campaign. They can download these direct from The Wildlife Trusts' website at www.wildlifetrusts.org or they can get hold of them by sending an A5 S.A.E. addressed to 'Prevent Pond Pests' campaign to their local Wildlife Trust. Contacts addresses for all local Wildlife Trusts can also be found on the website or can be obtained by telephoning 0870 036 7711.



Water primrose *Ludwigia grandiflora* (aka *Jussiaea*) blocking a waterway

6. Spread the message about aquatic invasives to your family and friends.

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As a supplier

1. Ensure all your plants are fully labelled with both common and Latin names to ensure they can be easily identified.
2. Ensure the public are aware of the dangers of buying these invasive species and their impact on the environment.
3. **Consider not stocking these plants at all.**
4. Instead, stock a good choice of alternative native water plants from the list below.
5. Display one of our Prevent Pond Pests posters and a selection of postcards, which can be obtained direct from The Wildlife Trusts' website at www.wildlifetrusts.org or from your local Wildlife Trust (see above).



Water fern *Azolla filiculoides* blocking a waterway



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Water friendly native plants you can buy

These are attractive native plants that will grow in and around water edges. These plants are adapted to the UK climate and can provide homes for our native insects and amphibians. Some, like water mint, have delicate fragrance, whereas others such as water flag and purple loosestrife have colourful flowers.

Common Name	Latin name
Water starwort	<i>Callitriche stagnalis</i>
Marsh marigold	<i>Caltha palustris</i>
Hornwort	<i>Ceratophyllum demersum</i>
Hair grass	<i>Eleocharis acicularis</i>
Willow moss	<i>Fontinalis antipyretica</i>
Mare's tail	<i>Hippuris vulgaris</i>
Water violet	<i>Hottonia palustris</i>
Yellow flag	<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>
Rushes	<i>Juncus species</i>
Purple loosestrife	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>
Water mint	<i>Mentha aquatica</i>
Bogbean	<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i>
Water forget-me-not	<i>Myosotis scorpioides</i>
Water milfoil	<i>Myriophyllum spicatum</i>
Whorled milfoil	<i>Myriophyllum verticillatum</i>
Yellow waterlily	<i>Nuphar lutea</i>
Amphibious bistort	<i>Polygonum amphibium</i>
Curly pond weed	<i>Potamogeton crispus</i>
Broad-leaved pondweed	<i>Potamogeton natans</i>
Water crowfoot	<i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i>
Spearwort	<i>Ranunculus lingua</i>
Brooklime	<i>Veronica beccabunga</i>

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Removal of Floating Pennywort
Hydrocotyle ranunculoides from a
watercourse



Which organisations are supporting the Prevent Pond Pests campaign?

The Water for Wildlife partners (The Wildlife Trusts, The Environment Agency, Water UK) plus The Centre for Aquatic Management part of the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, British Waterways, English Nature and Plantlife.

Further Information can be obtained from:

The Wildlife Trusts www.wildlifetrusts.org

The Environment Agency

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/conservation/840870/840894/840941/?lang=e&theme=®ion=&subject=&searchfor=invasive+species>

Water UK www.water.org.uk

British Waterways www.britishwaterways.co.uk

The Centre for Aquatic Plant Management www.capm.org.uk

Plantlife www.plantlife.org.uk

English Nature www.english-nature.org

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

Code of practice for the horticultural sector.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/non-native/pdf/non-nativecop.pdf>

The Pond Conservation Trust www.pondstrust.org.uk



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About Water for Wildlife

1. Water for Wildlife

Water for Wildlife aims to take forward wetland conservation across the UK, through partnership between The Wildlife Trusts, the water companies, Water UK, the Environment Agency and local communities. The UK Water Vole Steering Group, chaired by the Environment Agency, brings together organisations to work towards meeting Biodiversity Action Plan targets for water vole recovery. The Wildlife Trusts are key contributors to the Steering Group. To find out more about Water for Wildlife please visit the Trusts' website at: www.wildlifetrusts.org



Water for Wildlife Steering Group at project launch

2. The Wildlife Trusts

The Wildlife Trusts is a partnership of 47 local Wildlife Trusts across the UK, plus the Isle of Man and Alderney. Our vision is 'an environment richer in wildlife for everyone' and we're the largest UK charity exclusively dedicated to conserving all our habitats and species, with a membership of more than 530,000 people including 62,000 junior members. We campaign for the protection of wildlife and invest in the future by helping people of all ages to gain a greater appreciation and understanding of wildlife. Collectively, we also manage more than 2,500 nature reserves spanning over 80,000 hectares. For further information about The Wildlife Trusts please phone 0870 036 7711 or visit www.wildlifetrusts.org

3. Water UK

The water industry is divided into 12 regional water and sewerage companies, with 12 smaller water-only companies. The companies are all members of Water UK, the organisation that represents the industry at national and European level. The companies that provide direct support to the **Water for Wildlife** project are listed below:

Anglian Water, Bristol Water, Dwr Cymru Welsh Water, Folkestone and Dover Water, Mid-Kent Water, Northern Ireland Water Services, Portsmouth Water, Severn Trent Water, South East Water, South Staffordshire Water, Thames Water, United Utilities

4. The Environment Agency

The Environment Agency is the lead public body for protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales. The agency has 26 local areas and works on pollution control of air, land and water, flood and coastal defence, water resources, conservation, fisheries management, recreation and navigation.



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