

Canadian and Nuttall's Waterweeds

Species Description

Scientific name: *Elodea* species

AKA: Chwyn dŵr (Welsh)

Native to: North America

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

There are two non-native species of Waterweed *Elodea* species in the UK, 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 the UK as all plants are female.

Canadian waterweed, first recorded in Ireland in 1836 and in Britain in 1842, 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. First recorded as naturalised in Britain in 1966, it has since spread rapidly but is less common than Canadian waterweed in northern England, Scotland and Ireland.

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. Replace native aquatic plant species and reduce biodiversity in lakes and ponds and interfere with recreational activities such as angling and boating.

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

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



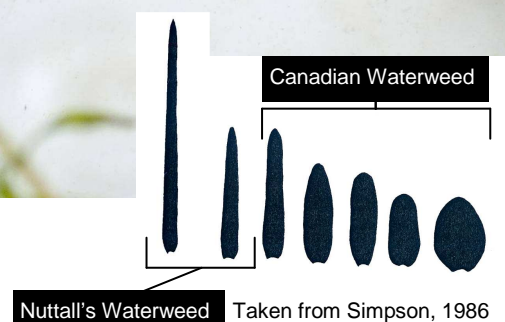
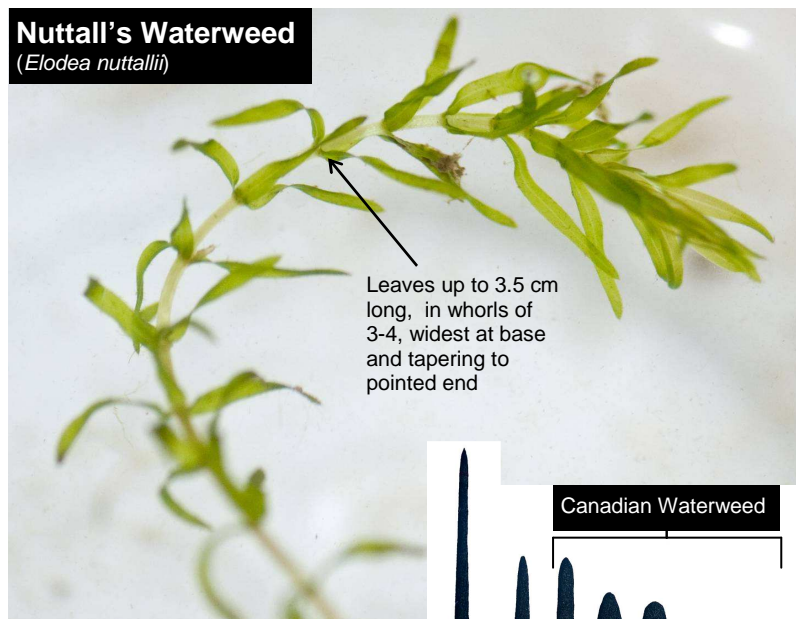
Key ID Features

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*)



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.

Distribution

Canadian waterweed is widespread and common throughout the UK. Nuttall's waterweed occurs mainly in England.

Similar Species

Curly Waterweed
Non-native
(*Lagarosiphon major*)

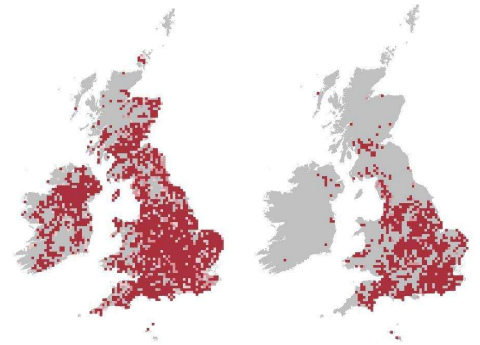


Lower leaves spiralled at base, not in whorls. Leaves to 3 cm long

Flowers inconspicuous, with reddish petals

Canadian Waterweed **Nuttall's Waterweed**

Source: New Atlas of the British & Irish Flora (Preston et al., 2002)



Large-flowered Waterweed
Non-native
(*Egeria densa*)



Flowers white, to 2 cm across, with three petals

Much larger in size with small teeth along central vein

Leaves in whorls of 4-5, to 3 cm long with 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".