

W.18 COARSE OXYGEN WEED/ GROWWE BABERGRAS

(*Lagarosiphon major* (Ridley) Moss ex Wager)

Family: Hydrocharitaceae

(Compiled by the Botanical Research Institute, Pretoria)

Coarse oxygen weed is a submerged plant densely covered with strongly recurved strap-shaped leaves. Its firm stems sprout from a rhizome and are up to 1 m long and 3 mm thick. The leaves are rather firm, up to 15 mm long, 2 to 3 mm broad and bear minute teeth along the margin. The pale pink to white flowers are only a few mm across and float on the surface. Male flowers break loose from the plant while female ones remain attached by long slender stalks. The egg-shaped fruit is about 5 mm long and contains up to 10 seeds.

Related species

Five species of *Lagarosiphon* are found in Southern Africa. They are very similar but can be roughly divided into two groups: (1) Plants with soft, only slightly recurved leaves 0,5-2 mm broad, and (2) Plants with firmer, strongly recurved leaves 2 to 3 mm broad. Coarse oxygen weed belongs to group (2) together with *L. ilicifolius* Oberm. The two species differ in the teeth along the margins of their leaves. In the coarse oxygen weed they are minute and point upwards, or they are absent; in the other species they are larger and point outwards to downwards.



Distribution

Coarse oxygen weed is widespread in the eastern half of Southern Africa including Botswana. It is a native of Africa but has been introduced in Europe and New Zealand.

Ecology

The plant thrives in still or slow-flowing water 1 to 2 m deep where it may form dense masses. It spreads by means of seeds and by regenerating from small portions of the plant.

Importance

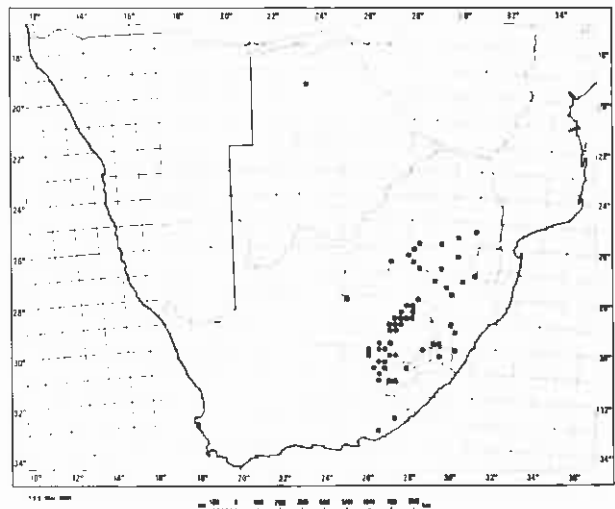
Coarse oxygen weed may become a pest at times by choking plant and animal life in dams and rivers.

Legislation

This plant, together with all other members of its family, is a proclaimed noxious weed throughout the Republic of South Africa (Proclamation 252/1956 (Government Gazette 2002/2 Nov. 1956) of the Weeds Act No. 42 of 1937).

Notes

The scientific name is derived from the Greek *lagaros* = slender, and *syphon* = tube, referring to the long, slender tube of the female flowers; *major* = greater.



Species Number: 0088.000-00300

Literature

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