

## W.2 FENNEL-LEAVED PONDWEED/ SKEDEFONTEINKRUID

(*Potamogeton pectinatus* L.)

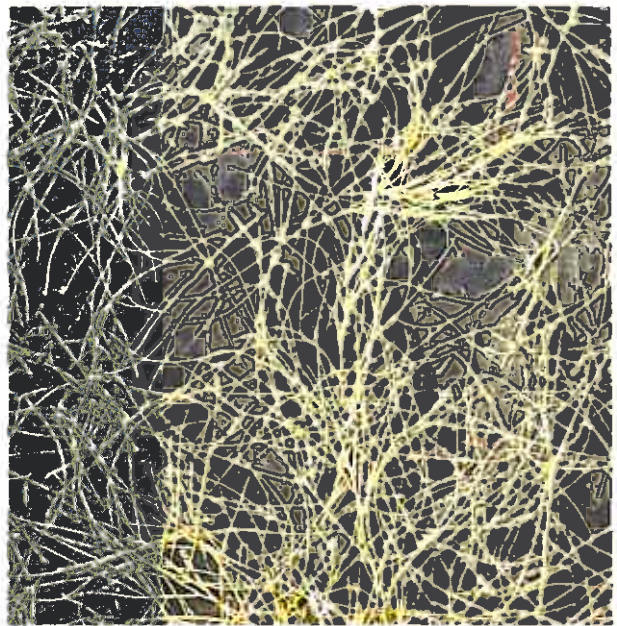
**Family: Potamogetonaceae**

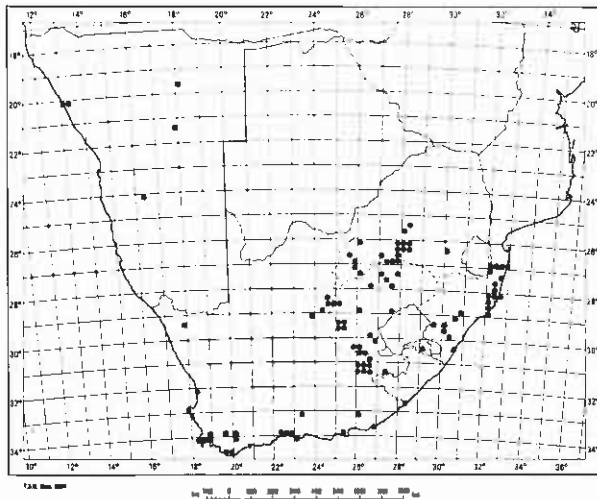
(Compiled by the Botanical Research Institute, Pretoria)

Fennel-leaved pondweed is a submerged, rooted water plant with thread-like leaves no broader than 2 mm. The leaves are attached to conspicuous whitish, open sheaths that partly enfold the stem. Small green flowers are borne in spikes which are usually just exerted above water. The spikes consist of 4 to 8 widely separated whorls of flowers. The fruit is yellowish brown and round, about 4 mm long and contains a single seed.

### Related species

Fennel-leaved pondweed can be distinguished from the other three Southern African species of





*Potamogeton* with very narrow submerged leaves by its leaves, which are attached to whitish, open sheaths that enfold the stem.

#### Distribution

A more or less world-wide species, which is common throughout most of Southern Africa. Fennel-leaved pondweed is one of the most frequent water plants in the Upper Orange River catchment and one of the dominant species in the Wilderness Lakes.

#### Ecology

This is the only species of *Potamogeton* which tolerates brackish water. It is a very vigorous, silt-loving plant that thrives in nutrient-rich water, frequently growing in the most heavily polluted zones such as channels with sewage effluent. Plants are often encrusted with lime.

#### Importance

It is a troublesome waterweed in farm dams and may clog filtration systems, and foul reservoirs, canals and ditches. Large masses of the species impede boating and fishing, as in the Sandvlei lagoon on the Cape Flats. Dams cannot be cleared of this weed by letting them dry out as it can survive in the form of special drought-resistant structures (turions). It is useful in damping wave action, so preventing bank erosion, and it provides nesting material and food for waterfowl.

#### Notes

The scientific name is derived from the Greek *potamos* = river, and *geiton* = neighbour; *pectinatus* = like the teeth of a comb.

Species Number: 0058.000-00300

#### Literature

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