

## W.17 WATER HORNWORT/WATERHORINGBLAAR

(*Ceratophyllum demersum* L.)

Family: Ceratophyllaceae

(Compiled by the Botanical Research Institute, Pretoria)

Water hornwort is a submerged, rootless plant with slender, branched stems up to 2 m long. Its leaves are dark green, stiff, twice forked into 4 (rarely 2, 3 or 5) narrow lobes with toothed margins. Arranged in rather close whorls, they are

densely crowded toward the tips of the stems which resemble the tail of a cat. Tiny greenish-white flowers without stalks grow in the axils of the leaves. The narrowly egg-shaped fruits with two short horns near the base, are about 5 mm long and contain a single seed.

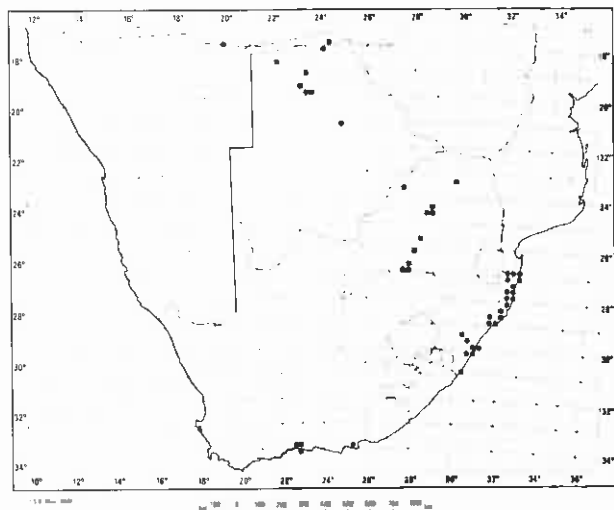


### Related species

Water hornwort is the only representative of the family in Southern Africa. It is sometimes confused with species of *Myriophyllum*, such as parrot's feather, or *Najas pectinata* (saw-weed). These plants, however, do not possess leaves that are arranged in whorls and forked into narrow (not thread-like) segments with toothed margin.

## Distribution

This cosmopolitan species is widely distributed in Africa. In Southern Africa it is known mainly from Caprivi, Botswana, Transvaal, Northern Orange Free State, the coast and midland regions of Natal and the Southern and Eastern Cape.



## Ecology

Water hornwort grows in still and slow-flowing water where it is sometimes anchored by root-like branches. It tolerates brackish conditions and may grow in rather weak light. In nutrient-rich water it may be a very fast coloniser. Water hornwort often grows together with other water plants such as *Myriophyllum aquaticum*

(parrot's feather) and *Potamogeton crispus* (curled pondweed).

## Importance

In dense masses which drift about just below the surface of the water it may cause problems by reducing stream and canal flow and by interfering with fishing and boating.

## Legislation

There is no legislation for the control of water hornwort.

## Notes

The scientific name is derived from the Greek *ceratos* = horn, and *phyllos* = leaf; *demersum* = submerged.

**Species Number: 2516.000-00100**

## Literature

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