



Updated January 2023

Milfoil (*Myriophyllum* species) identification guide

The Invasive Non-native Species (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 ([The Invasive Non-native Species \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)), makes it illegal to import, keep, breed, transport, sell, grow or cultivate certain plant species, including *Myriophyllum aquaticum* and *Myriophyllum heterophyllum*.

OATA has been alerted by regulators to a rising number of illegal imports of these two species. It is likely this is due to the incorrect naming or misidentification of species.

This guide has been created to help retailers distinguish legal from illegal Milfoil species and what to look out for to ensure you are not selling illegal plants.

It is crucial that you check any *Myriophyllum* species before they are sold to ensure that you are not selling an illegal, invasive species.

What to look out for

Although *Myriophyllum aquaticum* and *Myriophyllum heterophyllum* are illegal, they are often mislabelled using the following synonyms:

- *Enydria aquatica*
- *Myriophyllum brasiliense*
- *Myriophyllum proserpinacoides*

They are often confused with the following legal species:

- *Myriophyllum robustum*
- *Myriophyllum crispatum*

If you receive any *Myriophyllum* species using any of the names above you should use this ID guide to check that they are not the illegal species.



This ID guide has been created by the Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association
www.ornamentalfish.org

The illegal Milfoil species

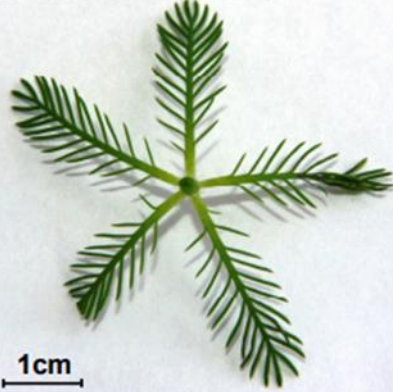
Parrot's Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*)

Parrot's Feather can be identified by its aerial blue-green tinted feather-like leaves which make it quite distinctive. Leaves form in groups of 4-6 evenly spaced from a central stem.



Myriophyllum aquaticum

Leaves form in whorls of 4-6



Myriophyllum aquaticum

Photo credit: Great British Non Native Secretariat (GBNNS)



Broadleaf Water Milfoil (*Myriophyllum heterophyllum*)

Myriophyllum heterophyllum has distinctive, thick leaves on the emergent part of the plant as you can see in the picture below left.



Myriophyllum heterophyllum

Photo credit: European Environment Agency



Myriophyllum heterophyllum

Photo credit: EPPO Global Database

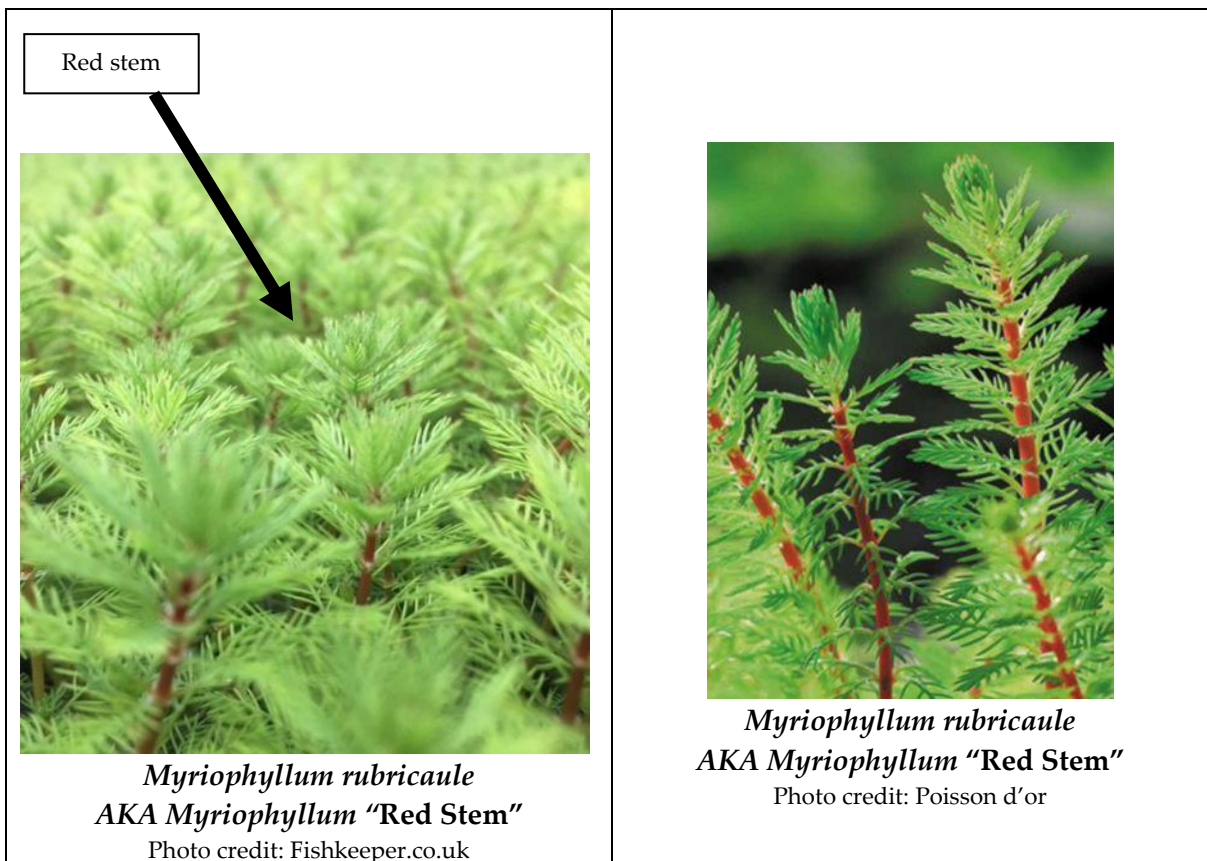


The legal Milfoil species

There are many species of *Myriophyllum* which are legal to import and sell, which are listed with their identification features below.

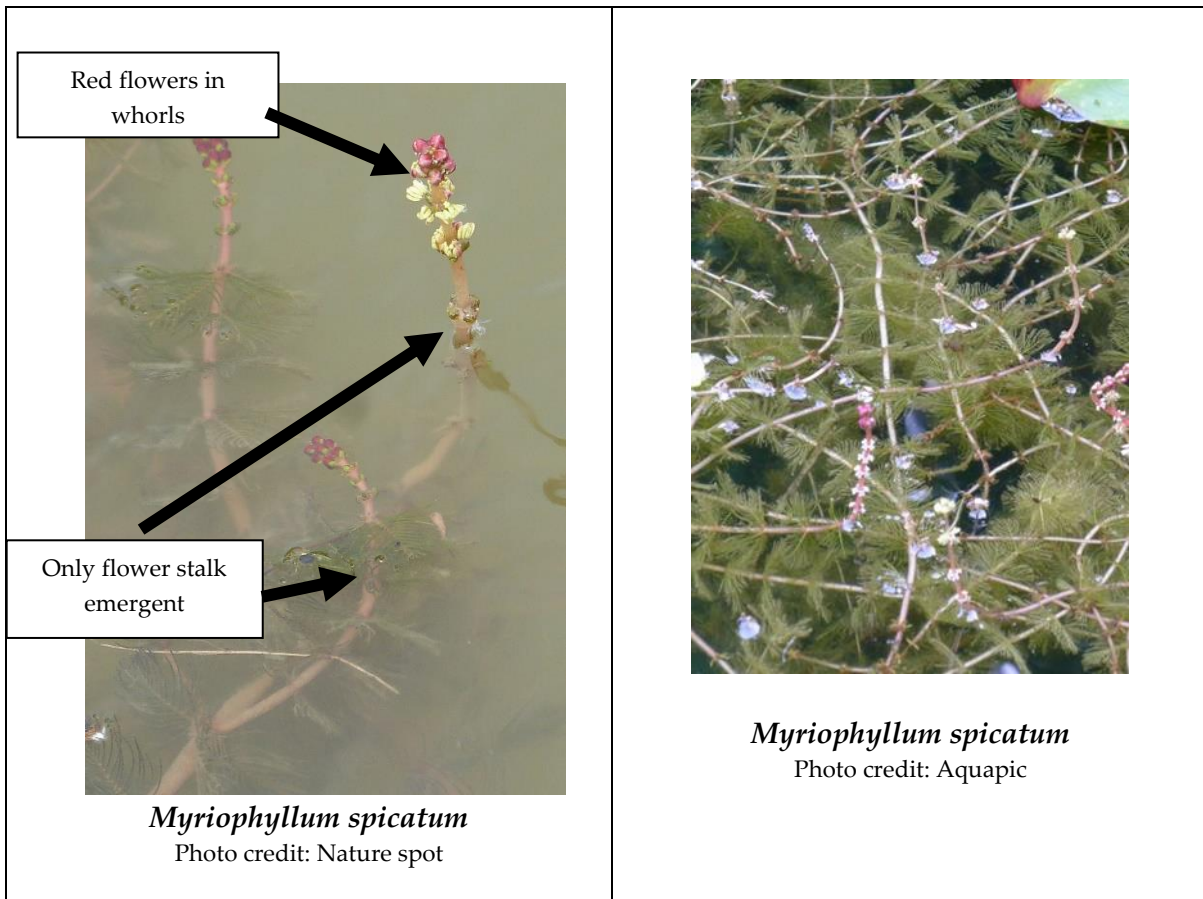
Myriophyllum "Red Stem" (*Myriophyllum rubricaula*)

This species has now been classified as *Myriophyllum rubricaula*. It may also be called *Myriophyllum* "Red Stem". It is legal to sell and can be distinguished from other *Myriophyllum* species by its red stem. Confusingly, it may also be labelled as *Myriophyllum brasiliense*, but this is incorrect.



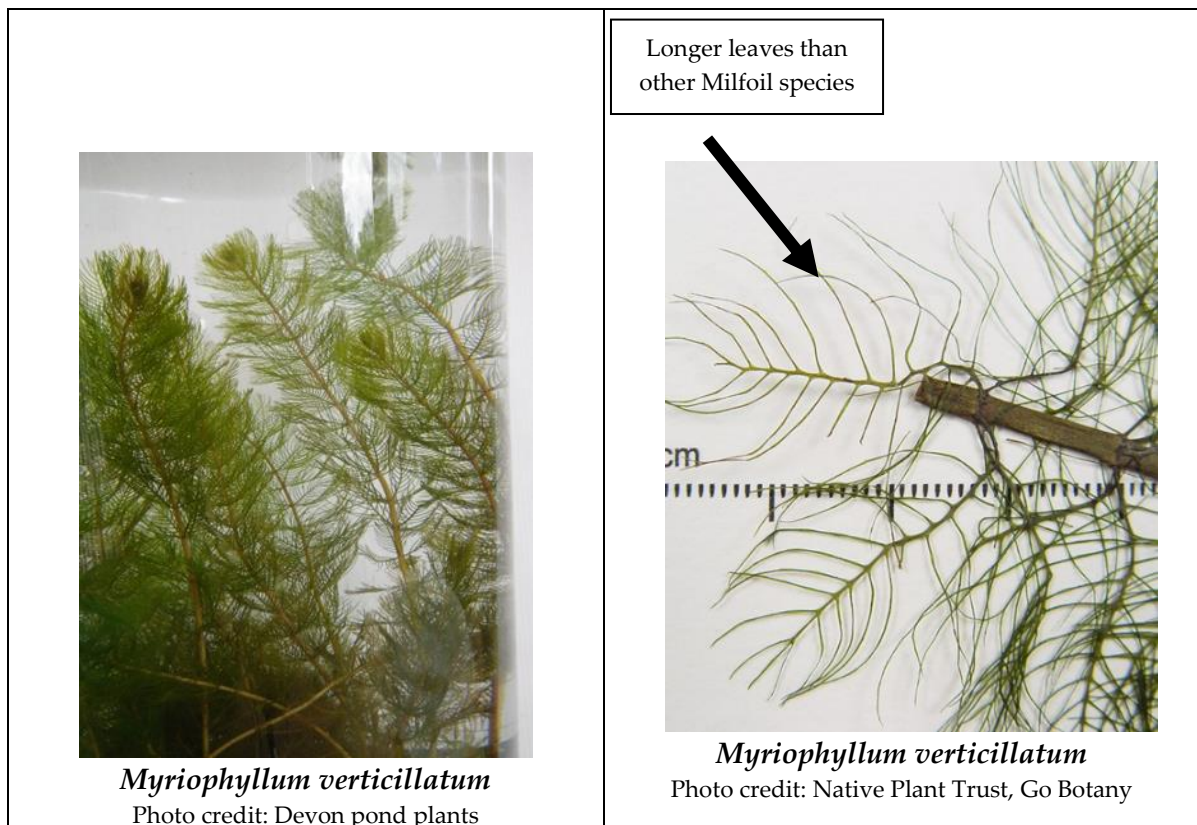
Spiked Water Milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*)

Myriophyllum spicatum is a **UK native plant** and is great for wildlife ponds. It has reddish flowers in whorls as seen in the picture. Additionally, only its flower stalks will emerge from the water.



Whorled Water Milfoil (*Myriophyllum verticillatum*)

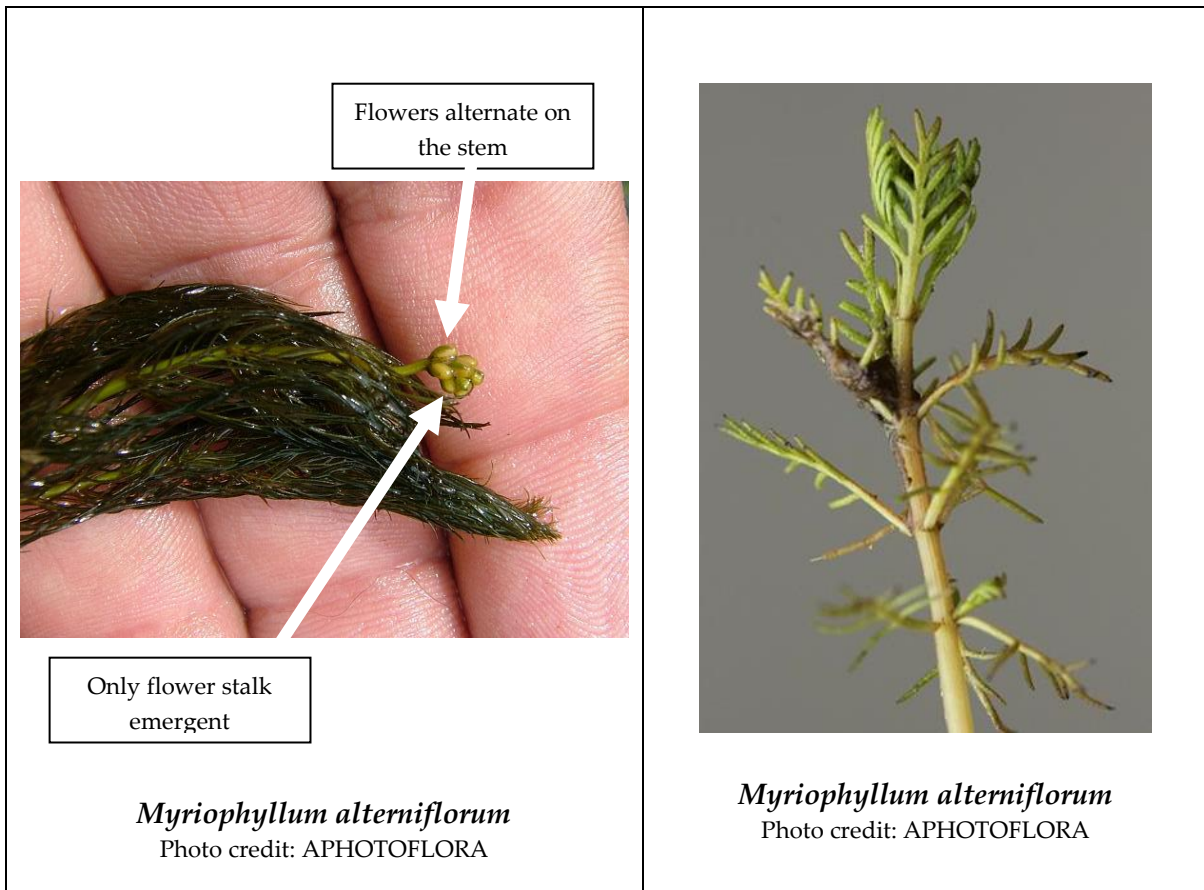
This species looks very similar to Spiked Water Milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) however it has slightly longer leaves as shown in the photograph below. It is another **UK native species**.



Alternate Water Milfoil (*Myriophyllum alterniflorum/alternifolium*)

Myriophyllum alterniflorum/alternifolium has opposite or alternate flowers and its leaves usually have fewer segments. As a native *Myriophyllum*, only its flower stem will emerge from the water.

This is another UK native species.



Upright Water Milfoil (*Myriophyllum crispatum*)

Myriophyllum crispatum will have small reddish flowers with white stigmas growing alongside the stem in the summer.



Myriophyllum crispatum
Photo credit: Yarra Ranges Council

Red flowers
growing
alongside leaf

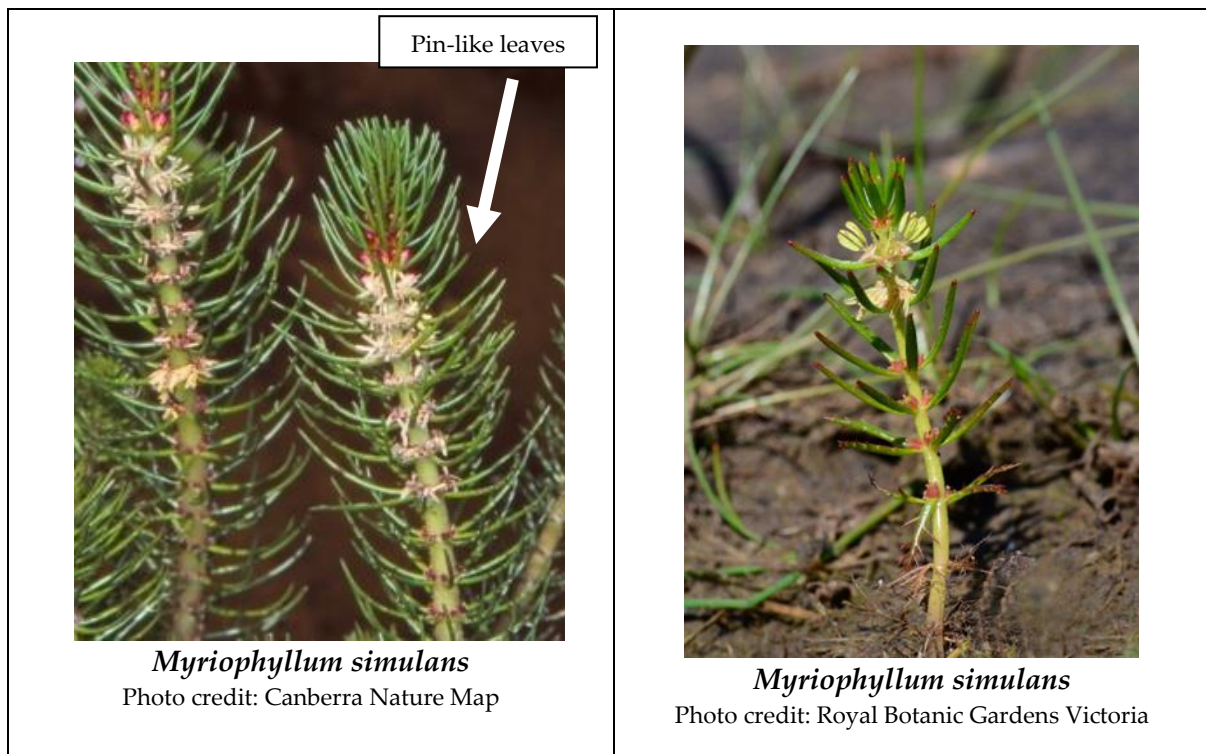


Myriophyllum crispatum
Photo credit: Yarra Ranges Council



Amphibious Water Milfoil (*Myriophyllum simulans*)

This species differs from others as it has a more pin like leaf when immersed.



Robust Water Milfoil (*Myriophyllum papillosum*)

This species is easily confused with Upright Water Milfoil (*Myriophyllum crispatum*). However, *Myriophyllum papillosum* may have fewer leaves in each whorl, but this varies depending on emergent/submerged leaves and from plant to plant.



Usually less leaves per whorl than *M.crispatum*

Myriophyllum papillosum

Photo credit: Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria



Myriophyllum papillosum

Photo credit: The pond shop

This identification guide has been put together by the Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association to help plant sellers ensure they are selling legal plants within the UK. OATA would like to thank James Allison of Aquapic Water Garden Solutions and Caroline Everett of Anglo Aquatic Plants for their help with this guide.



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