



Management Measures for Widely Spread Species (WSS) in Northern Ireland Floating pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*)

As per Article 19 requirement of EU Regulation 1143/2014
*on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of
invasive alien species*

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Floating pennywort - <i>Hydrocotyle ranunculoides</i>	
Description	Native to North and South America. A floating, aquatic plant with fleshy stems and roundish reniform, bluntly toothed leaves.
UK Status	Present at least at fifteen known sites in Northern Ireland; Has been recorded from still or slow-flowing water in lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, ditches and canals.
Pathways	Introduced as an ornamental for garden ponds and aquaria from which it spread to natural habitats through deliberate and accidental releases. Spreads mainly via translocation of small fragments, which can produce new plants. Non-standardised naming and misidentification in the trade, can lead to <i>H. ranunculoides</i> being traded under an incorrect name.
Aim	To contain and, where possible, reduce the extent of floating pennywort with localised eradications being carried out in high priority areas.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure strict biosecurity when working in proximity to <i>H. ranunculoides</i> to avoid further spread. 2. Eradicate small populations of floating pennywort locally in Northern Ireland - where feasible. 3. Where populations are discovered in new, high priority sites (e.g. ASSIs) attempt eradication, and revisit later in the season and in subsequent years (where feasible).
Prevention	
Border and pathway actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Floating pennywort is already established across Northern Ireland at a variety of sites - https://northernireland-species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0000459812 - Under the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation 1143/2014, it is an offence to plant this species, or otherwise cause it to grow, in the environment. - Under the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation it is also an offence to import into the EU, keep, grow or cultivate, transport (to, from or within the EU; except to facilitate eradication), place on the market, use or exchange this species - unless there are specific exemptions or a permit issued. - ID sheet developed and deployed to border staff - Border Force, Border Inspection Posts (BIPs), Plant Health Inspection Branch (PHIB), etc. - Liaison with the Wildlife Crime Northern Ireland (PAWNI) group to ensure species is not being traded or smuggled into N.I.



<p>Stakeholder communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to raise public and other stakeholder awareness of non-native invasive aquatic plants and provide advice including guidance on control methods and identification information. - Awareness campaigns - Check Clean Dry, Be Plant Wise to alert water users, gardeners and retailers to the threat the species poses. Northern Ireland versions at: https://invasivespeciesireland.com/what-can-i-do/check-clean-dry/; https://invasivespeciesireland.com/what-can-i-do/be-plant-wise/ - Traders are not permitted to purchase or sell this species. - Gardeners and land owners are permitted to keep plants of this species which are already growing on their land. They must act responsibly and not allow or encourage it to spread outside their land-holding. Owners should consider safely removing and disposing of any plant covered by the IAS Regulation by composting or burning. - Guidance is provided in the Northern Ireland Horticultural Code of Practice at: www.invasivespeciesireland.com
<p>Early detection and rapid response</p>	
<p>Surveillance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A new, dedicated surveillance mechanism is not necessary as a number of existing recording schemes allow reporting of this species: - In Northern Ireland species records are entered to CEDaR online recording via www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI or via the Invasive Species Ireland website - http://invasivespeciesireland.com/report-sighting/. Entering a record generates an email to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) Invasive Species Team. - Wildlife recording Apps (iRecord App) are available which allow users to report sightings of invasive plants. - Relevant Government agencies such as DfI Rivers, AFBI and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency staff record the presence of non-native invasive species when they are encountered as part of their work. - Non-Governmental Organisations (e.g. Rivers and Fishery Trusts and Boards, Wildlife Trusts, etc.) undertake surveys of freshwater habitats and report incidental sightings of non-native invasive species. - All NI Councils to also record and report presence of non-native invasive species on their estates.
<p>Rapid response</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In certain areas a rapid eradication following a confirmed sighting may be appropriate, particularly in cases where it is first discovered in a new catchment. Once widely established sustainable control is extremely difficult.

Long-term management

- When floating pennywort is not yet widespread within a catchment it should be managed to reduce its impacts and contain it, where feasible.
- Management options include: mechanical, chemical and environmental. The plant can be cut with weed cutting buckets or boats; re-cutting will be necessary through the growing season. Raking is usually more effective than cutting as it also removes some of the roots. Hand-picking the remaining fragments following mechanical removal increases effectiveness. Care must be taken not to facilitate spread so the use of capture nets to prevent downstream infestation is essential. Appropriate chemical control of remaining plants should be undertaken and works well on this species. Shading (planting trees) can assist in reducing establishment.
- The GB Environment Agency has produced a guidance document - Aquatic and riparian plant management: controls for vegetation in watercourses. Technical guide Project: SC120008/R2 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/aquatic-and-riparian-plant-management-controls-for-vegetation-in-watercourses>.
- Scottish Natural Heritage have produced guidance - Vegetation Management in Nature Conservation: Integrated Pest Management Handbook <http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/heritagemanagement/Integrated%20Pest%20Management%20Handbook.pdf>

Research

- Research is currently being undertaken to investigate options for the biological control of this species. Should this prove to be feasible then it could offer a cost effective and sustainable approach to help manage the species in the longer term.



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