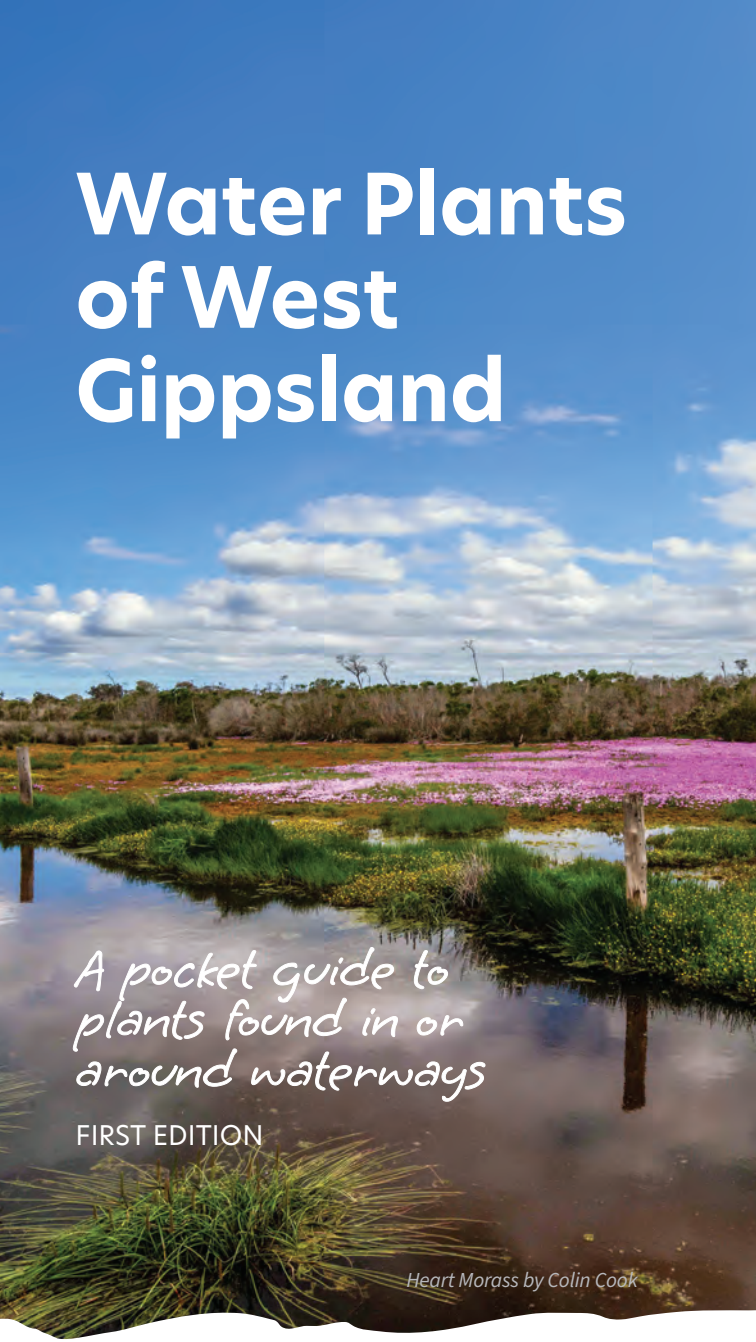
Water Plants of West Gippsland



A pocket guide to plants found in or around waterways

FIRST EDITION

Heart Morass by Colin Cook

West Gippsland
Catchment Management Authority

wgcma.com.au

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Owners of the region, the Gunaikurnai, the Bunurong, the Boonwurrung and the Wurundjeri peoples and pay respects to Elders, past, present and emerging.

Introduction

ABOUT THE GUIDE

Thank you for picking up a copy of the Water Plants of West Gippsland pocket guide. This guide is intended to help you gain a better understanding of the types of plants you will discover in and around wetlands, creeks, rivers and farm dams across West Gippsland.

WHAT ARE WATER PLANTS?

Water plants are plants that need water to survive. More importantly they require the right amount of water at the right time in their lifecycle. A flush of water can help rehydrate a plant, trigger reproduction or distribute seeds. These plants are important as food or habitat for birds, frogs and fish, to filter the water, or to hold soil together.

Several West Gippsland rivers and wetlands receive 'water for the environment'. This is a share of water set aside in major reservoirs for environmental benefit and carefully released down the river to support the health of West Gippsland's waterways. It can also be diverted from the river into the Lower Latrobe wetlands and Heyfield wetlands, to help water plants, frogs, and waterbirds.

Water for the environment is a critical tool to support the health of rivers and wetlands and in doing so support the people and communities that rely on them.

To be kept informed about deliveries of water for the environment, along with related news and updates, use the QR code to sign up to our **Current Water Releases newsletter**.

SPECIES INDICATOR:

- Native
- Introduced

Image: The tiny half-moon flowers of Shiny Swamp Mat (Goodenia radicans) at Dowd Morass.

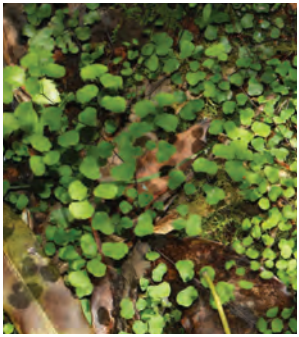
Ferns often grow in dense colonies beside streams and wetlands. They provide shelter and food for a range of native animal species, including small mammals like Antechinus. Their roots can also trap organic matter and prevent erosion.

FISHBONE WATER-FERN

- *Blechnum nudum*
- Younger leaves have shiny black stems
- Stands upright, old plants can have a trunk

POUCHED CORAL-FERN

- *Gleichenia dicarpa*
- Forms scrambling thickets in permanently wet soils
- Smallest end leaves curve over to form a tiny pouch underneath



COMMON MAIDENHAIR

- *Adiantum aethiopicum*
- Small, low growing fern with bright green leaves
- Pointed branches with tiny scale or fan shaped leaves

Reeds, rushes, sedges and grasses are often the most obvious and dominant plants in and around a waterway. They have long thin leaves and stems. They provide shelter (both above and below the water), food and nest materials for a wide variety of native animals. There are many different species in Victoria and some can be tricky to identify.

WATER COUCH

- *Paspalum distichum*
- Grows up to 60 cm tall
- Forms dense mat, spreads above and below ground using runners

SALT CLUB-SEDGE

- *Bolboschoenus caldwellii*
- 1 m tall upright stems with up to 7 mm wide leaves arranged along their length
- Gold, brown seeds that emerge directly from the leaf edge

TALL SEDGE

- *Carex appressa*
- Thin leaves up to 1.2 cm wide
- Flowerheads form a long, twirled spike on a triangular stem which extends beyond the leaves

GIANT RUSH

- *Juncus ingens*
- Up to 5 m tall with rigid round stalks
- Feathery bunches of tiny brown flowers on the edge of a stalk, develop into round seeds

TALL SPIKE-SEDGE

- *Eleocharis sphacelata*
- Stalks up to 1.5 m tall often found in deep open water, with rigid hollow stems which pop like bubble wrap if squeezed
- Bristly flowers emerge from the end of the stalk, turn into brown pointed seed heads

COMMON SPIKE-SEDGE

- *Eleocharis acuta*
- Rounded stems up to 60 cm tall that change into a triangle shape below the flower
- Similar to Tall Spike-sedge except these plants are smaller and stems do not pop when squeezed

COMMON REED

- *Phragmites australis*
- Flat, pointed alternating leaves on a straight bamboo-like stem usually up to 3 m tall
- Flowers are a soft fluffy bunch at the top of the stem

NARROW-LEAF CUMBUNGI

- *Typha domingensis*
- Flat leaves, about 5 mm wide and up to 2 m tall
- Reddish-brown seed pods at the top of the rounded stalk, with a 3 cm green gap in the middle

LESSER REED-MACE

- *Typha latifolia*
- Grey-green leaves up to 3 m tall and up to 2.5 cm wide
- Very similar to Narrow-leaf Cumbungi except for no visible gap mid-seed head

RIVER CLUB-SEDGE

- *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani*
- Round stalks ending with clusters of golden-brown flowers with tiny white hairs
- Reddish brown cone shaped seed heads

TASSEL CORD-RUSH

- *Baloskion tetraphyllum*
- Thin bamboo-like stalks ending with thin feathery leaves
- Flowers are pink-red spiky balls twisted along the leaf

LEAFY FLAT-SEDGE

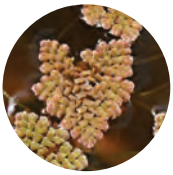
- *Cyperus lucidus*
- Glossy green triangle shaped stems, up to 1.5 m tall
- Stalks end in bunches of spiky purple-brown flowers with white curly hairs

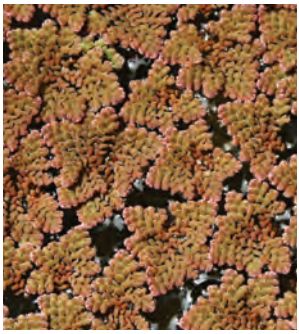
Floating and submerged plants grow in the water from the bottom or floating freely on the top. They can form thickets which provide shelter and food for native animals, such as ducks.

WATER HYACINTH

Report sighting to Agriculture Victoria

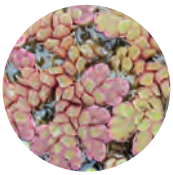
- *Eichhornia crassipes*
- Free floating with glossy green leaves and bunches of vibrant purple flowers
- It spreads quickly, chokes waterways and destroys habitat for fish and birds

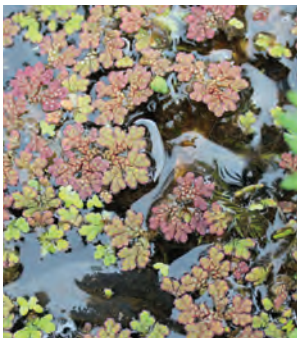




FERNY AZOLLA

- *Azolla pinnata*
- Triangle shaped leaf growing up to 2.5 cm
- Roots covered in fine hairs





PACIFIC AZOLLA

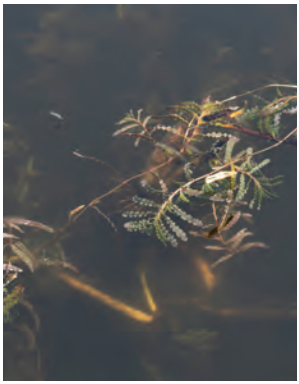
- *Azolla rubra*
- Fan shaped plant, up to 3.5 cm wide
- No hairs on its long roots

WATER-RIBBONS

- *Cycnogeton procerum*
- Flat strappy leaves which can be floating or standing out of the water
- Long stalky green flowers up to 1.5 m tall

EEL GRASS

- *Vallisneria australis*
- Pink or white flowers, with three tiny petals
- Straight leaves and spiral flowering stems up to 3 m long found submerged or floating in fresh water



CURLY PONDWEED

- *Potamogeton crispus*
- Long branching, flowing leaves with wavy edges up to 4 m long
- Found submerged or floating in fresh water

Bushes, vines and ground covers provide food, shelter, spawning and nesting sites for fish, frogs, birds and insects.

COMMON WATER-STARWORT

- *Callitriche stagnalis*
- Spreads out in a dense mat over wet or muddy areas, can tolerate direct sunlight
- Leaves a rounded spoon shape, up to 2.5 cm long

ROUND WATER-STARWORT

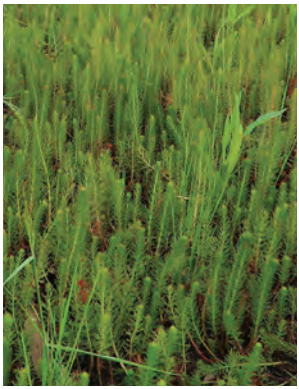
- *Callitriche muelleri*
- Grows in wet soils or shallow water, in shady areas
- Tiny leaves up to 7.5 mm long, with a pointed end

COMMON SNEEZEWEED

- *Centipeda cunninghamii*
- Small shrub up to 30 cm tall
- Thin leaves with serrated edges and small green round flower heads

UPRIGHT WATER-MILFOIL

- *Myriophyllum crispatum*
- Long thin leaves up to 2 cm, with longer feathery leaves under the water
- Has pink flower buds which emerge from the main stem, with thin cream/yellow petals



PARROT'S FEATHER

- *Myriophyllum aquaticum*
- Feather shaped, blue-green leaves with tiny white fluffy flowers
- A highly invasive weed which blocks creeks and drains

KARKALLA

aka Pigface

- *Carpobrotus rossii*
- Small spreading succulent with fleshy, curved leaves
- Large silky purple flowers

WATER PEPPER

- *Persicaria hydropiper*
- Upright annual plant which grows up to 1 m high
- Thin pointed leaves and tiny green/ white flowers

SLENDER KNOTWEED

- *Persicaria decipiens*
- Upright annual plant up to 80 cm high
- Dark green leaves with pointed ends and purplish blotch in the middle, pale pink flowers

LARGE BINDWEED

- *Calystegia sepium*
- Climbing plant with bell shaped white and pink flowers with five petals
- Green pointed leaves with purplish stem

CENTELLA

- *Centella cordifolia*
- Creeping plant with fleshy heart shaped leaves, with obvious veins and scalloped edges
- Tiny pink flowers which turn into brown rounded seeds

FRINGED HEARTWORT

aka Native Liverwort

- *Ricciocarpos natans*
- Fleshy pairs of heart shaped bright green leaves
- Usually free floating with a mass of matte-black dangling roots

WATER BUTTONS

- *Cotula coronopifolia*
- Plants grow to 20 cm tall and can form dense mats
- Leaves are forked, flat and fleshy
- Flowers look like the middle of a daisy

SMALL RIVER BUTTERCUP

- *Ranunculus amphitrichus*
- Shiny leaves are separated into three or five segments, often submerged under water
- Flowers are pale yellow to yellow-green with four to nine thin petals

CREEPING BUTTERCUP

- *Ranunculus repens*
- Grows up to 50 cm tall, dark green hairy leaves separated in three segments
- Flowers have five glossy butter yellow petals

WATER PLANTAIN

- *Alisma plantago-aquatica*
- Bunches of tiny flowers with three white-purple petals
- Pointed leaves with long stems graduating from green to purple towards the base

WATER PRIMROSE

aka Clove Strip

- *Ludwigia peploides*
- Can be a floating mat or a low bush on the water's edge
- Plant has long oval-shaped leaves and bright yellow flowers with five to six petals

ERECT MARSH-FLOWER

- *Liparophyllum exaltatum*
- Upright plant with dark green, heart shaped leaves on long stalks
- Bunches of yellow flowers with frilled petal edges

BEADED GLASSWORT

aka Samphire

- *Salicornia quinqueflora*
- Short fleshy succulent with swollen jointed branches, often red at the tips
- Prefers salty soils and water

Find out more

The content in this booklet has been taken from Nick Romanowski's water plants books, now out of print. Common names in this booklet match those used in the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas. You find out more about these plants by searching their botanical names online.

The VicFlora website can be especially helpful. Use the QR code to visit **VicFlora**.

Use the QR code to visit the **Pl@ntNet** plant identification app and website.

This guide was written by Tash Marty-Cripps as part of West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority's environmental water project. Thanks to the following contributors: Irene Proebsting, Lorraine Norden, Matt Campbell, Ken Harris, Dylan Osler, Elsa Burnell and Doug Frood.

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Image by Damien Kook.