

Tassel Stonewort *Tolypella intricata*



Image: Sue Hooton

Classification

Stoneworts are aquatic non-vascular plants.

How to identify Tassel Stonewort

- A branching underwater plant that reaches c.40cm in length and resembles a tangled fishing net.
- Plants grow rapidly in early spring, and begin fruiting from the end of March, dying back again by the end of May, although in cool wet years they can survive into June.

Habitat and requirements

- Found in shallow water such as pools, ditches and semi-permanent puddles which dry up in summer.
- Sporadic in appearance; can colonise areas of recent disturbance, such as newly dredged ditches or winter flooding that may be suitable only for short periods. Their durable spores, which can remain dormant yet viable for decades, allow them to persist through periods when conditions are unsuitable.

National Status

Declining nationally and classed as Vulnerable. This species has been found in only 7 locations in Britain since 1970: Gloucestershire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Somerset, Oxfordshire and Worcestershire. Tassel Stonewort was once more widespread, being recorded from 42 localities before 1970, most of which were in southern and eastern England. It is scattered throughout Europe, extending to southern Scandinavia, the Black Sea and North Africa.

Suffolk Status

Two plants were re-found in 20 cm of water in a small ditch between arable fields at Mickfield in 1998. They were first recorded there in the early 1960s. The site is designated as a County Wildlife site. The species re-appeared in good numbers in Spring 2014.

THREATS TO TASSEL STONEWORT IN SUFFOLK

- ⇒ Lack of ground disturbance ('poaching' or trampling) caused by a reduction in grazing and other management practices. This allows other vegetation to out-compete this species.
- ⇒ A lack of research - it is not known to what degree water conditions such as turbidity and nutrient load are important factors.
- ⇒ Falling water table levels.
- ⇒ Eutrophication

ASSOCIATED HABITAT FACTSHEETS

Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, Ponds

CONSERVATION ACTIONS

- ◆ Maintain open conditions by removing vegetation regularly and using cattle grazing.
- ◆ Monitor nutrient levels regularly and reduce the levels if necessary.
- ◆ Create ponds with suitable habitat for colonisation.
- ◆ Monitor known sites regularly (plants will not appear every year).

WHERE TO FIND FURTHER INFORMATION

- ◆ [JNCC UK BAP Priority non-vascular plant species >](#)
- ◆ Sanford, M.S. and Fisk R 2010. A Flora of Suffolk, D.K. and M. N. Sanford, Ipswich
- ◆ [Arkive - Tassel Stonewort >](#)
- ◆ [Plantlife – Important stonewort areas >](#)

Images of Suffolk BAP species can be found on [Pinterest >](#)

SPECIES DESIGNATIONS

- ◆ Red List Vulnerable 2004
- ◆ NERC Act (2006) S41 Priority Species 2008
- Biodiversity Action Plan UK list of Priority Species 2007

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