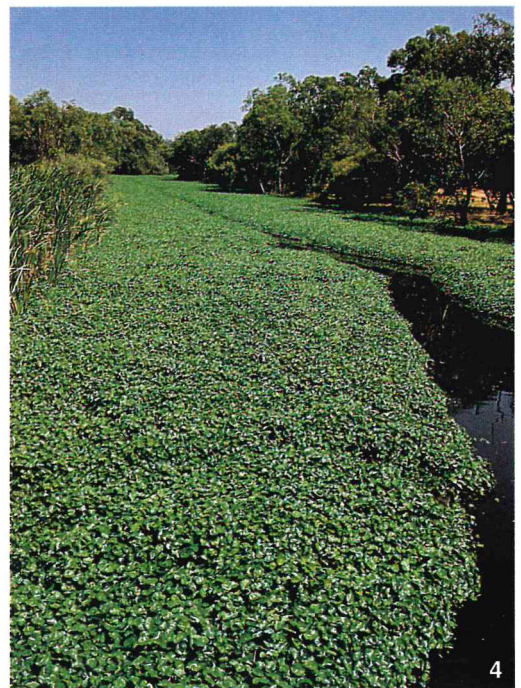


## HYDROCOTYL

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1. Hydrocotyl
2. Plants and their roots form a dense mat
3. Flower
4. Infestation

(Photos: Robyn Knox)

# HYDROCOTYL

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## **What you should know about hydrocotyl**

Hydrocotyl (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*), is also known as water pennywort. It is one of the few water plants that are members of the plant family Apiaceae (Umbelliferae); the family includes common garden vegetables such as

carrots, parsnips and celery. It is a native of Europe. Hydrocotyl is often grown as an aquarium plant, but until recently had not become established in the wild in Australia.

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## **Why hydrocotyl matters to you**

Hydrocotyl forms dense floating mats which interfere with navigation, irrigation and river ecology. They also constitute a safety hazard.

Humans or animals that fall through a mat or are dragged under one by the river current would have great difficulty in escaping alive.

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## **What you should look for**

- Hydrocotyl has extensive floating rhizomes which may reach several metres in length. These branch producing dense interwoven mats.
- Roots are up to 60 cm long. They are thin and trail in the water. Roots arise from each node of the rhizomes and anchor the mats into the river banks or stream bed.

- Leaves are either round or kidney-shaped, up to 55 mm across. They are soft and thin (about 1mm thick). Leaf stalks arise from the stem nodes.
  - Flowers are difficult to see because of the leaves. They are small, creamy-yellow in colour and about 2 mm across. They form in groups of 5 - 10 on a short flower stalk that arises from a node.
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## **Why hydrocotyl might succeed in WA**

The weed spreads both vegetatively and by seeds. It grows very rapidly during the warmer months and mats can extend up to several hundred metres along river banks. However they tend to stay small (approximately one square metre) when not anchored to the bank. Hydrocotyl has horizontal rhizomes. Sections of the rhizomes readily break off and float away

if the mat is disturbed. Even pieces as small as three cm long can regenerate whole plants successfully, forming new mats. Hydrocotyl flowers in summer and appears to form viable seeds in WA. These may be spread by waterfowl to form new infestations. Hydrocotyl is killed by salty water.

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## **What you can do about it**

Infestations are frequently caused by people who dump unwanted aquarium plants in lakes and rivers. Dry and burn any plants removed from fish tanks or garden ponds.

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## **Where to find out more**

For further information on hydrocotyl contact the Agriculture Protection Board, Baron-Hay Court, South Perth 6151. Telephone (09) 368 3472 or the nearest country office of the APB or the Department of Agriculture.

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