Curly Waterweed (*Lagarosiphon major*)

**Synonyms:**
- crispy waterweed, curly water-thyme, African elodea, oxygen weed
- *Elodea crispa*, *Anacharis crispa*, *L. muscoides*, *L. muscoides major*, *L. muscoides var. major*

**Consignments likely to come from:** Southern Africa (the native range of this species)

**Use:** normally in aquaria and garden ponds, sold as an oxygenator.

**Identification difficulty:** moderate, seek definitive identification from: jonathan@water-land.co.uk.

**Identification information:**
- robust aquatic plant up to 3m long
- leaves are strongly curved, close-set (crowded towards the tip of the stem) and dark green
- leaves are alternatively arranged in a spiral around stem (but whorls at top of stem)
- normally packed in bunches

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**Key ID Features**

- Lower leaves always alternate in a spiral (see images right and below) upper leaves either spiral or whorled
- Leave can be crowded towards tip of stem
**Similar species**

Very similar to some species in the genus *Egeria, Elodea* and *Hydrilla*, however is identified by its alternative leaves (all others have whorls) and strongly curved leaves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Egeria densa</th>
<th>Egeria najas</th>
<th>Elodea callitrichoides</th>
<th>Elodea canadensis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaves in whorls of (3)4-6</td>
<td>Leaves in whorls of 4-6</td>
<td>Leaves in whorls of 3</td>
<td>Leaves in whorls of 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaf tip blunt, margin minutely toothed, leaf width 3-5 mm</td>
<td>Leaf tip acute, margin conspicuously toothed, leaf width 2.5 mm</td>
<td>Leaf tip acute, margin minutely toothed, leaf width 2-5 mm</td>
<td>Leaf tip blunt, margin minutely toothed, leaf width 2-4 mm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elodea nuttallii</th>
<th>Hydrilla verticillata</th>
<th>Lagarosiphon major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaves in whorls of 3</td>
<td>Leaves in whorls of (4-)5(-8)</td>
<td>Leaves alternate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaf tip acute, margin minutely toothed, leaf width 2 mm</td>
<td>Leaf tip acute, margin conspicuously toothed, leaf width 2-4 mm</td>
<td>Leaf tip acute, margin minutely toothed, leaf width 1-3 mm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comparison of leaf shapes**

- *Lagarosiphon major*
- *Egeria densa*
- *Elodea canadensis*
- *Elodea nuttallii*
- *Elodea callitrichoides*
- *Hydrilla verticillata*

Additional online resources to support identification:

- Q-bank
- University of Florida

Photos and diagrams from: Joanne Denyer, Wikimedia Commons, Olaf Booy, Max Wade and Helen Roy.