

Mermaid-Weeds

Proserpinaca spp.

HERBS: NON-WOODY PLANTS



Comb-leaved
Mermaid-Weed with fruits
© MEGAN CROWLEY



Comb-leaved
Mermaid-Weed flowers and fruit
© MEGAN CROWLEY

Comb-leaved Mermaid-Weed

Proserpinaca pectinata

NS General Status Rank: Sensitive

◆◆ Distribution: NS, NB, NL

Leaves growing above the water are deeply dissected (comb-like or pectinate), 1.5-3 cm.



Marsh Mermaid-Weed © ALAIN BELLIVEAU

Marsh Mermaid-Weed

Proserpinaca palustris
var. *palustris*

NS General Status Rank: At Risk

◆◆ Distribution: NS

Leaves growing above water are toothed (serrate) or leaf-shaped (pinnatifid), 2-8 cm.

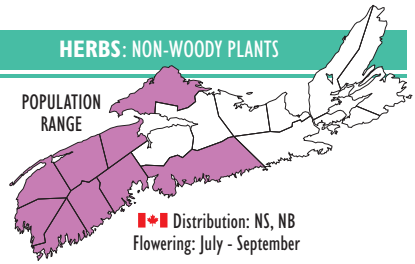
Intermediate Mermaid-Weed

Proserpinaca intermedia

NS General Status Rank: At Risk

◆◆ Distribution: NS

Named "intermedia" because it is considered a hybrid with characteristics between Comb-leaved and Marsh Mermaid-Weed. It can be found growing with these species or alone.



SIZE: 10-40 cm tall.

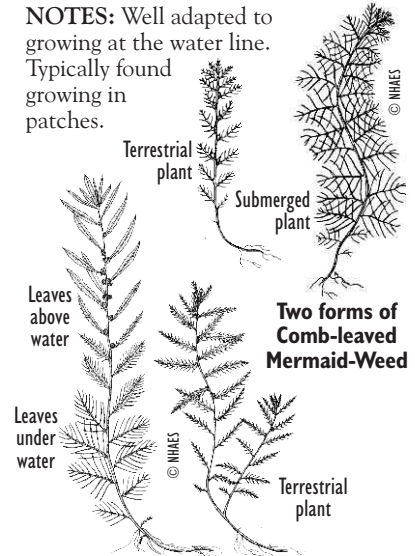
LEAVES: Plants completely out of the water (terrestrial) have similar leaves throughout. Plants growing in the water have different leaves above and below the water. The leaves below the water are deeply cut almost to the midline (pinnatisect), while the leaves above differ between species (see below). The leaves are alternately arranged.

STEM: Weak and grows off a horizontal plant stem (rhizome).

FLOWERS: Single flowers with no petals found where the leaf attaches to the stem (leaf axil).

FRUITS: Whitish, 3-angled and 2.5-4 mm wide.

NOTES: Well adapted to growing at the water line. Typically found growing in patches.



Habitat:

Wetlands (bogs, marshes, swamps), stream edges and lakeshores.

Interesting point: Small fish and aquatic insects use this plant for food and shelter and it is often cultivated for use in aquaria and ponds.

Similar species: *Proserpinaca palustris* var. *creba* is likely the prevalent variety in NS. It is very similar looking and distinguished by subtle differences in fruit shape. The full distribution of var. *palustris* in NS is likely incomplete.