Colpomenia peregrina

Common names: Oyster thief, Bladder weed, Balloons.
Irish name: Gadaí oisrí.

Phylum: Ochrophyta
Class: Phaeophyceae
Order: Ectocarpales
Family: Scytosiphonaceae
Genus: Colpomenia
Species: C. peregrina

Fig 1. Underwater plants of *Colpomenia peregrina.*

Morphology

- Brown alga shaped like a hollow sphere or ball when young. As the plants get older the cavity fills with air and the round shape becomes amorphous and collapses.
- The plant has thin walls, with a smooth texture and is non- gelatinous.
- Colour is brown to olive brown, 3 to 7 cm in diameter.
- Often confused with *Leathesia marina* of thicker shiny walls and gelatinous.

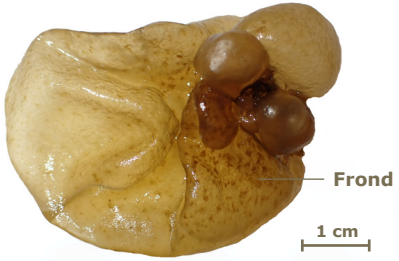

Fig 2. Morphology.

Reproduction

- *Colpomenia peregrina* has an heteromorphic life cycle with an alternation of the ball-like gametophytes and sporophytes in the form of an easily overlooked loosely filamentous crust (see LC4*).
- Extensive asexual reproduction also takes place from unfertilised female gametes, zoospores and fragmentation.
- Fertile *Colpomenia* has an irregular sori evident as slightly darker areas.

♀♂ Male and female structures occur on separate filamentous individuals.

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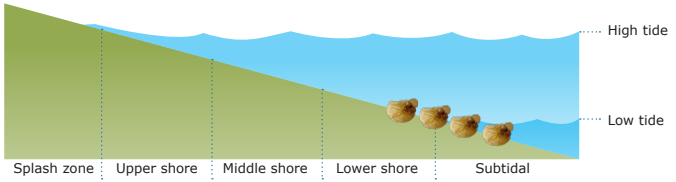
*Note: Life-cycle 4 (LC4) on page 4.

Fig 3. *Colpomenia peregrina* plants exposed at low tide.

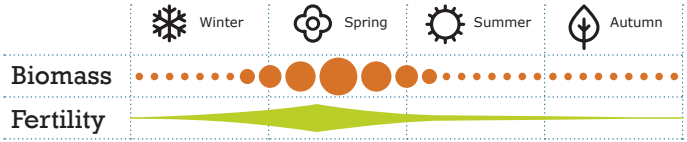
Colpomenia peregrina

Distribution and habitat

- Occurs in the NE Atlantic, from Norway to Canary Islands; Eastern Mediterranean, Israel and Turkey; NW Pacific, Japan; NE Pacific from Alaska to California, Australia and New Zealand.
- Found as an epiphyte on seaweeds in the intertidal zone, in pools and also on wave-exposed rocks.



Seasonality



Note: These seasonal characteristics may vary slightly from year to year.

Wild resource and cultivation

interesting facts

• At the beginning of the 20th century, *Colpomenia* was introduced on the Atlantic coast of France, possibly by the Gulf stream drift and migrated to most Atlantic and Mediterranean shores.

• It was reported to have caused considerable damage to the oyster industry in France. Plants of *Colpomenia* attached themselves to the oysters and when bladders became old they filled with air and caused the oysters to float away and be lost, - hence the common name Oyster thief.

• The tissue of the hollow ball tears like paper and is a good way to distinguish it from *Leathesia marina* which breaks into gelatinous pieces.