



Himanthalia elongata

Common names: Sea spaghetti, Sea bean, Thongweed.

Irish names: Rúalach, Ríseach, Raif.

Phylum: Ochrophyta
Class: Phaeophyceae
Order: Fucales
Family: Himanthaliaceae
Genus: Himanthalia
Species: *H. elongata*



Fig 1. Individuals of *Himanthalia elongata*.

Morphology

- This brown alga is closely related to the wracks.
- The so-called “button” is its vegetative base, which annually produces a regularly forked and extremely long receptacle.
- Receptacles are 1-3 m long, 5-10 mm wide, flat, of yellow-brown colour and flexible.
- Older individuals are often overgrown by brown epiphytes forming fine, soft tufts especially near the tips.
- This species has a distinct morphology that is unlikely to be confused with any other species in Ireland.



Fig 2. Morphology.

Reproduction

- *Himanthalia elongata* has a direct life-cycle (see LC5*).
 - Reproductive structures are found on the thong-like fronds known as receptacles and appear in little brown dimples (conceptacles).
- ♀ Male and female structures occur on separate individuals.

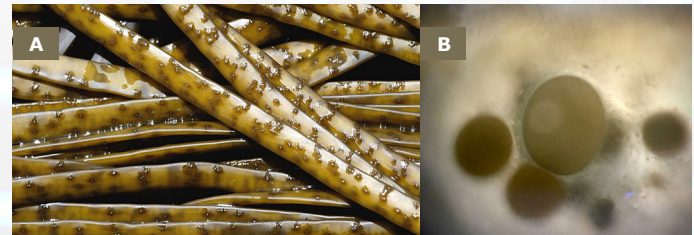


Fig 3. (A) Receptacles with brown, spot-like conceptacles. (B) Female eggs under a microscope.

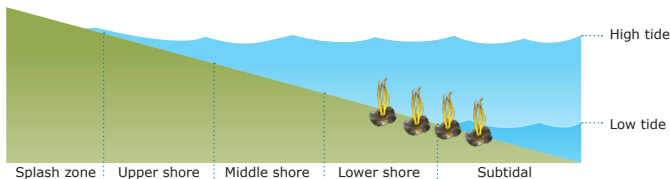
*Note: Life-cycle 5 (LC5) inside front cover.



Himanthalia elongata

Distribution and habitat

- *Himanthalia elongata* is found along the European Atlantic coasts (from the Faroe Islands to Portugal).
- It grows on rock and in rock-pools on moderately wave exposed shores.



Seasonality



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

Wild resource and cultivation



interesting facts

- Receptacles of *Himanthalia elongata* can be cooked or pickled before eating them as "haricots de mer" (sea beans). Fronds are best when collected young in spring.
- Extracts from this seaweed are used as additives with claimed functions as antioxidants, moisturising, antibacterial and anti-UV properties.
- First successfully cultivated in Ireland in 2019 by the Irish Seaweed Consultancy (INTEGRATE project).



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