

# Harpoon Weed

*Asparagopsis armata*

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## Pathway

- Natural dispersal - both phases raft and drift on surface currents
- Hull fouling
- Aquaculture - via oyster import

## Impacts



### Biodiversity

Dominates algal assemblages in some locations and outcompetes native species for space and light.



### Human Health

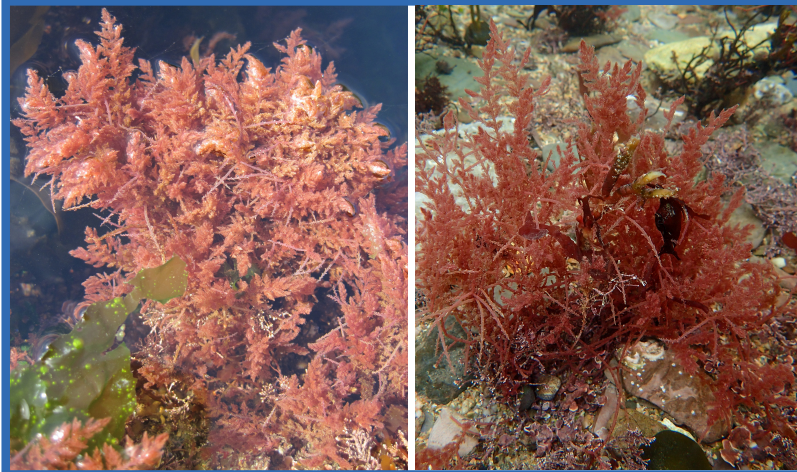
None known.



### Economy

Has the potential to clog fishing nets during bloom-like outbreaks.

## Key ID Features



## Description

Red seaweed with many harpoon-like hooks on lower branches used to attach to other algae and seagrasses.

The conspicuous phase of the life history alternates with a small indistinctive fluffy phase.

### Sexual phase (gametophyte):

**Size** Main fronds up to 30 cm tall and 1 cm wide.

**Colour** Pale purple-red, yellowish pink or whitish pink, turning orange when removed from water.

Erect and spreading, with bushy fronds.

### Asexual phase (tetrasporophyte):

**Size** Tufts are 1 - 3 cm in diameter.

**Colour** Rose pink.

Forms dense cotton wool like spheres.

\*Note: Images not to scale



## Distribution

**Native range:** Australia and New Zealand/ Pacific and Indian oceans.

**Non-native range:** Global, including Atlantic, Pacific and Indian oceans.



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## Habitat and Ecology

### Sexual phase (gametophyte)

**Habitat:** Usually occurs during the summer in shallow, subtidal waters or deep tidal waters on the lower shore to depths of 40 m. It attaches to various substrates, commonly other algae, by harpoon-like barbs.

### Asexual phase (tetrasporophyte)

**Habitat:** Occurs all year round typically in subtidal waters to depths of 40 m. Can be free living or epiphytic (growing on other algae) or tangled with seagrasses and other seaweeds.

**Reproduction:** both stages reproduce by cloning (vegetatively). Sexes are separate in the gametophyte phase.

Has chemical defences so is not often subject to predation.

## Confusion with similar species

*Asparagopsis armata* has distinctive harpoon-like barbs on lower branches.

*Bonnemaisonia hamifera* (pictured below) occurs in similar habitats but has curling hooks instead of the harpoon-like hooks.



Curling hooks instead of harpoon like hooks

If you think you have seen this species, please contact the person below who will confirm its identity.

Please also refer to the mitigation strategies guidance document, provided as part of the Marine Biosecurity Toolkit.

## Further Information

- <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/factsheet/factsheet.cfm?speciesId=373>
- <https://www.marlin.ac.uk/species/detail/1619>
- <http://www.iucn-medmis.org/?c=Guide/specie/2>

## Images

Front: All images © Francis Bunker  
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