

The Pennywort Project

Eradicating floating pennywort from the Upper Cam

In 2016 the upper Cam at Grantchester Meadows was blocked by the recently arrived invasive weed Floating Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*) for months. We are determined this will never happen again.

Floating pennywort grows rapidly (up to 20cm/day in summer) from tiny fragments of stem which drift down the river then grow into large rafts that float on the water. The Environment Agency advises that the best way of eradicating it is by a combination of volunteers pulling out the strands and carefully disposing of them, supplemented by an annual mechanical clearance of the large rafts.

The Pennywort Project is a community led project to help eradicate it from the Upper Cam. It is coordinated by Cam Valley Forum and supported by volunteers, community groups, landowners, agencies, councils and businesses.

Pennywort Pulling

Experts recommend the following:

Pulling pennywort: pennywort floats on the water, and can easily be pulled out by hand or rake. If it has taken root in the bank, the root should be gently dug out.

Disposal: Pennywort can be left on the bank somewhere dry, and it will rapidly die. Somewhere dry, several meters from the water should be found, where cattle, pedestrians or the wind won't spread it back into the water. Great care should be taken not to contaminate neighbouring ditches or damp places. We have obtained permission to leave it on land owned by Trumpington Farm Estates, Kings College (ie Grantchester Meadows) and the City Council. It can also be put in a green wheelie bin or compost heap.

Don't shred it, don't spread it: even a 1cm length of stem floating down the river will be enough to grow into a new patch, so it's important to remove patches cleanly. Where fragments are drifting in the water, a small net or springbok rake can be useful for collecting them. Where rafts are too big to be lifted safely in one piece, they must be left to be dealt with in the annual mechanical clearance.

All gear must be cleaned (eg rakes, nets, fishing equipment, boats) especially before going to other river systems

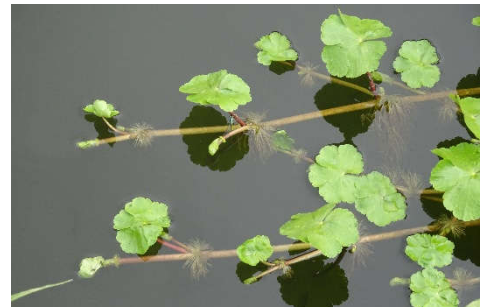
Staying safe: Pennywort is safe to handle, but working near a river is hazardous, and working alone is potentially dangerous. If you wish to help, you are encouraged to join a working party.

Further information from www.camvalleyforum.uk

If you would like to join a pennywort pulling working party on the upper Cam, please contact info@camvalleyforum.uk



Floating Pennywort on upper Cam: Dec 2016
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Floating Pennywort, August © Mike Foley