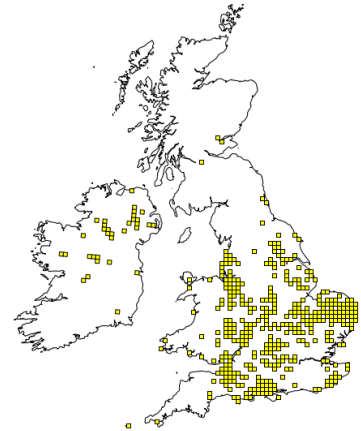


Tubular Water Dropwort – *Oenanthe fistulosa*

Current Status

Tubular Water-dropwort is a delicate wetland plant which was once common throughout England and Wales. Although it is still widely distributed (Figure 1), significant losses have occurred across its range, particularly since the 1950s. As a result it is now a Priority Species for conservation in both England and Wales.

Tubular Water-dropwort is typical of the carrot family, having tall upright hollow stems (typically up to 60cm; although it can be up to 1m tall and in grazed situations may not be more than 20cm high). Its small white flowers (July to September) are held in umbels at the end of long stalks, becoming rounded fruiting heads later in the year. The leaves are variable, and it may be confused with other water-dropworts. However the characteristic stem leaves, and grey green colour provide certainty in identification.



© NBN Gateway

Figure 1. Current distribution of Tubular Water-dropwort in the UK.

Habitat Requirements

Tubular Water-dropwort likes damp or wet habitats, usually in areas of winter flooding. It occurs in ponds, but may also be found in wet meadows and pastures in the flood plains of rivers, in marshes and fens, and in emergent and fringing vegetation by rivers, streams, canals, ditches and lakes.



Figure 2. Two contrasting Tubular Water-dropwort Habitats – growing around the margin of a well-established pond (left) and a grazed seasonal pond (right).

Threats

- **Loss of grazing** – Tubular Water-dropwort thrives in areas with low to moderate levels of grazing. Grazing and light disturbance of the pond margin provides bare ground for seedlings to germinate. Few sites, with the exception of nature reserves, are still managed in this way.
- **Land use changes** - particularly urban encroachment and the intensification of agriculture., resulting in the loss of ponds and wetlands, habitat fragmentation and isolation and deterioration of habitat quality.
- **Pollution** – agricultural and urban run-off has led to declines in freshwater quality , species sensitive to high levels of nutrient enrichment, such as Tubular Water-dropwort, are lost.
- **Changes to hydrology** – the seeds and stolons of Tubular Water-dropwort were historically spread by seasonal inundation of the floodplain, and subsequent germination in the margins of seasonally fluctuating pond margins. Loss of natural flood dynamics and stabilisation of water levels has resulted in significant declines in species such as Tubular Water-dropwort.

Tubular Water Dropwort - *Oenanthe fistulosa*

Identification



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Key Features:

- 30-100cms tall
- Hairless, hollow, grey-green stems
- Stems are inflated between leaf junctions
- Lower leaves are 2-pinnate and have thin oval leaflets
- Upper leaves are 1-pinnate (restricted to the final 3rd of the leaf), thin and linear
- White flowers held in umbels (3-5 flower heads per umbel) which have few rays and no bracts
- Flowers July - September
- Each flower is 3mm wide
- Sweetly celery scented
- Falls over easily, as stems are weak

Stem inflated at leaf junction

Stem leaves with long petiole – leaflets restricted to final 3rd

Stem leaves, linear, 1-pinnate

Umbels of tiny white flowers

Hollow hairless stem



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Similar looking species:

Narrow-leaved Water-dropwort *Oenanthe silaifolia*

Main differences: Flowers earlier (May-June). Leaflets of stem leaves not confined to top 3rd of the leaf as in Tubular Water-dropwort. Unlike Tubular Water-dropwort, the broad basal leaves usually wither and disappear before flowering.

Parsley Water-dropwort *Oenanthe lachenalii*

Main differences: Stems solid. Many bracts and bracteoles (specialised leaves) present below flower heads, which are absent in Tubular Water-dropwort.

Corky-fruited Water-dropwort *Oenanthe pimpinelloides*

Main differences: Stems solid. Some bracts and bracteoles present below flower heads, which are absent in Tubular Water-dropwort. Not commonly found in wetlands.

Hemlock Water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata*

Main differences: An altogether bigger and more robust plant. The stem leaves are broad and similar to the basal leaves, unlike Tubular Water-dropwort where only the basal leaves are broad, the stem leaves being linear.

River Water-dropwort *Oenanthe fluviatilis* and Fine-leaves Water-dropwort *Oenanthe aquatica*

Main differences: In both these water-dropworts, the flower heads grow from the leaf axils along the stem. The flower heads of Tubular Water-dropwort are terminal - i.e. growing at the top of the stem.