



Typical Wetland Plants of the **Glenelg Hopkins** region



Wetlands within the Glenelg Hopkins region represent approximately 44% of Victoria's total wetlands. Wetlands do not necessarily have to be permanently wet; more biologically diverse wetlands are often those that periodically dry out.

A wetland can be made up of a variety of characteristics including slope and depth. These characteristics can be broken into typical vegetation zones.

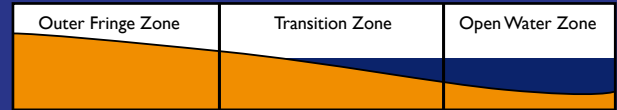


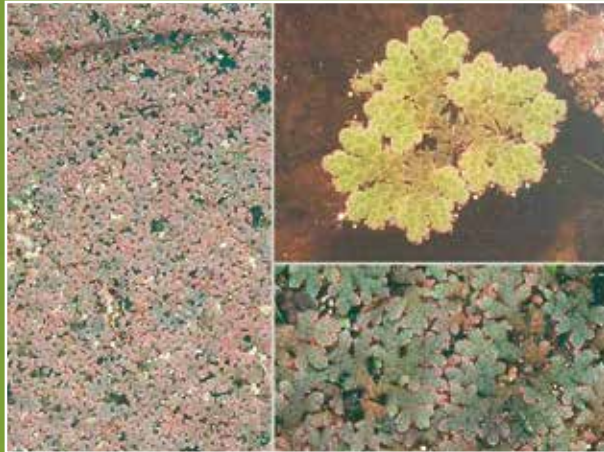
Hoary-headed Grebe - Photo Rob Drummond, Hamilton.

Within this guide we have described these zones as:

- The **open water zone**; which is generally immersed in water and typically supports floating and submerged plants often with long floating stems.
- The **transition zone**; which periodically dries out in more permanent wetlands depending on seasonal changes. It typically supports sedges, emergent rushes and reeds as well as herbaceous semi-aquatic plants.
- The **outer fringe zone**; typically supports trees, shrubs and tussocky grasses which can tolerate short term flooding.

This field guide contains 20 wetland plant species commonly observed in these three wetland zones. These species provide a range of benefits to wetland birds, frogs, aquatic insects and fish species by providing food, shelter, cover from predators and breeding habitat.





Pacific Azolla (*Azolla filiculoides*)

Description:

Floating green or red fern with deeply lobed fronds. Has a smooth string like root and grows vigorously in cooler weather with the potential to cover the water surface.

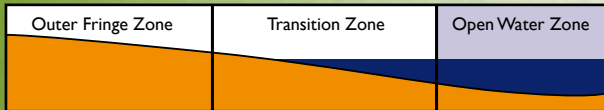
No flower.

Habitat:

Stationary and slow moving water bodies, especially if nutrient levels are above normal.

Ecology:

Provides a food source for swans and ducks. Can indicate the presence of high nutrient levels in wetlands.



Tall Spike-rush (*Eleocharis sphacelata*)

Description:

Can stand 2m out of the water. Stems 12 mm wide.

Flower:

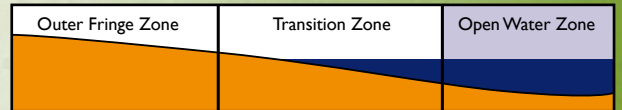
Cone like flower head always at the tip of the stem, September to February.

Habitat:

Wet to flooded soils, fresh water pools, lake margins and billabongs. It readily establishes itself in dams and new pools of standing water.

Ecology:

Provides shelter and nesting sites for many birds. Regional indigenous people also used the stems for mats or split them in half for basket weaving.





Floating Pondweed (*Potamogeton tricarlinatus*)

Description:

Aquatic herb with broad floating leaves to 45mm long. There are 2 types of leaves, submerged and floating.

Flower:

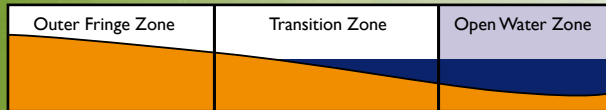
Small green flowers 4mm wide with 4 small petals, September to April.

Habitat:

Slow moving and stationary water bodies, rivers, creeks, channels and drains.

Ecology:

Excellent habitat for frogs and aquatic insects.



Common Water-ribbons (*Triglochin procerum*)

Description:

Typically 20-30cm tall. Leaves flat or slightly concave, leaves float on the water.

Flower:

Small green flowers, January to December.




Habitat:

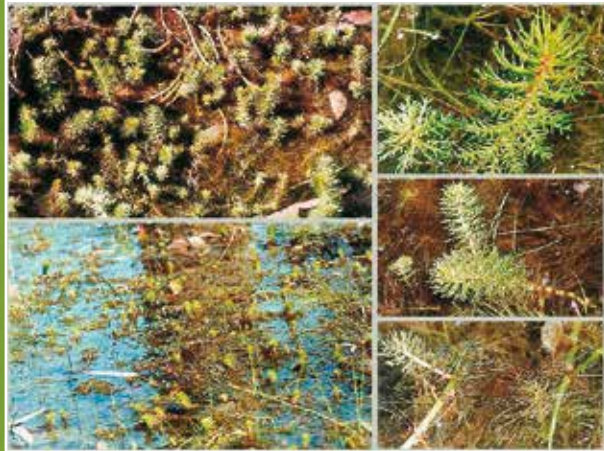
Shallow water of freshwater lakes, streams and swamp scrub. It requires to be submerged in freshwater to 1.5m deep or areas subject to regular inundation.

Ecology:

Good indicator of a healthier aquatic environment. The tubers were historically eaten raw as well as roasted by regional indigenous peoples. Provides egg laying habitat for frogs. Bird species such as the Baillon's Crake utilise the floating leaves to forage for food.



Outer Fringe Zone	Transition Zone	Open Water Zone
		



Upright Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum crispatum*)

Description:

Up to 60cm tall. Emergent leaves arranged around the stem.

Flower:

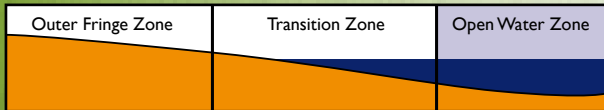
Inconspicuous flower, October to April.

Habitat:

Both permanent and seasonal wetlands, slow moving water bodies up to approximately 1m deep.

Ecology:

Provides excellent habitat and breeding areas for frogs and aquatic insects.



Common Spike-rush (*Eleocharis acuta*)

Description:

Up to 60cm tall. Cylindrical green stems 1-3mm in diameter.

Flower:

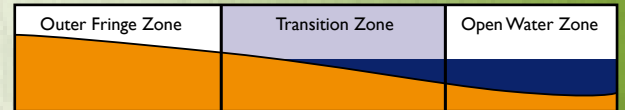
Always at the tip of the stem in a cone like shape, September to February.

Habitat:

Shallow wetlands including channels as well as lake and river margins.

Ecology:

Frogs utilize stems for egg attachment.





Coast Saw-sedge (*Gahnia trifida*)

Description:

Up to 1m tall, blue green, hairless, long narrow leaves.

Flower:

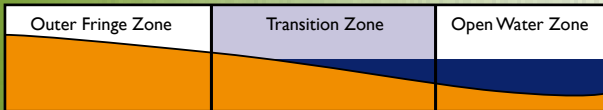
Pale brown chaffy flowers, September to November.

Habitat:

Margins of salt marshes and saline or semi saline inland swamps and slow flowing streams.

Ecology:

Indigenous inhabitants ground the hard fruits for food.



Sea Rush (*Juncus kraussii*)

Description:

Up to 60cm tall. Cylindrical green stems 1-3mm in diameter.

Flower:

Always at the tip of the stem in a cone like shape, September to February.




Habitat:

Shallow wetlands including channels as well as lake and river margins.

Ecology:

Frogs utilize stems for egg attachment.



Outer Fringe Zone	Transition Zone	Open Water Zone
		



Pale Rush (*Juncus pallidus*)

Description:

Up to 1.5m tall. Pale green stems.

Flowers:

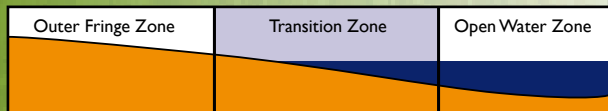
Many pale yellow flowers, October to January.

Habitat:

Found in low open forest, sclerophyll forest, grassland plains, tea-tree heath and the margins of wetlands.

Ecology:

Provides habitat for bird and frog species.



Poison Lobelia (*Lobelia pratioides*)

Description:

Up to 5cm tall, dull green leaves.

Flower:

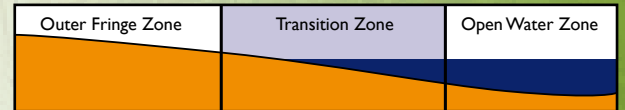
White to pale purple flowers with yellow and dark purple markings in the centre, November to January.

Habitat:

Water-logged soils and the margins of wetlands.

Ecology:

Soil stabilizer.





Creeping Monkey-flower (*Mimulus repens*)

Description:

Up to 5cm tall. Smooth creeping stems with small leaves.

Flower:

Light purple with white and yellow markings, 10mm wide and 10mm long, September to May.

Habitat:

Water-logged sites freshwater to saline, on edges of swamps, lakes or estuaries.

Ecology:

Can indicate potential rising salinity in wetlands. Attractive flower.

Outer Fringe Zone	Transition Zone	Open Water Zone

Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*)

Description:

Up to 2.5m tall. Cane like stems.

Flower:

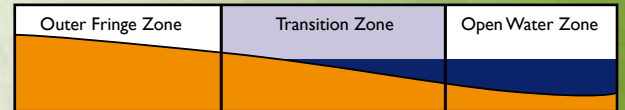
Leafy cane like flower stems, numerous hairy flowers, November to May.

Habitat:

Found across the whole of Australia in deep slow moving water bodies, creek margins, channels and drains and areas with high water tables or seasonally inundated areas.

Ecology:

Important in ecosystems as it provides cover and habitat for birds, frog and insect species. Prevents wave or stream erosion and can also be very useful for waste and urban water runoff filtration.





Small River Buttercup (*Ranunculus amphitrichus*)

Description:

Up to 5cm tall. Deeply divided shiny leaves with three lobes. Two types of leaves, those that develop out of water, and those that develop beneath the water. Both have similar shape yet submerged leaves develop toothed lobes on each larger lobe.

Flower:

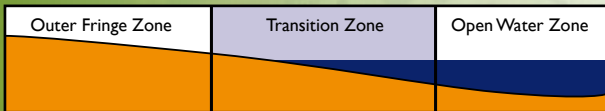
Pale yellow flower to 1cm across with 4-9 widely spaced petals, October to December.

Habitat:

Shallow margins of watercourses and wetlands.

Ecology:

Provides habitat for aquatic insect species.



Creeping Brookweed (*Samolus repens*)

Description

Up to 30cm tall. Dense small leaved foliage, leaves grey green and hairless.

Flower:

Small white star shaped flowers 10mm across, December to February.

Habitat:

Coastal salt marshes subject to tidal inundations. Also found in saline areas subject to periodic water-logging.

Ecology:

Provides foraging habitat for wetland bird species and habitat for aquatic and semi aquatic insects. Potential salinity indicator.



Outer Fringe Zone	Transition Zone	Open Water Zone



Sharp Club-sedge (*Schoenoplectus pungens*)

Description:

Up to 65cm tall. Long narrow leaves with triangular, blue green stems.

Flower:

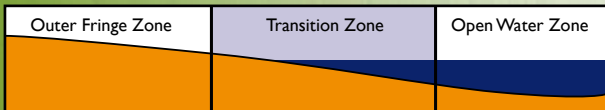
Red brown chaffy flowers located approximately 6cm from the top of the stem, September to November.

Habitat:

Freshwater and semi-saline swamps and pools, can tolerate very brackish and alkaline conditions.

Ecology:

Provides habitat for bird, frog and insect species.



Narrow-leaf Cumbungi (*Typha domingensis*)

Description:

1-2m tall and a yellowish green colour.

Flower:

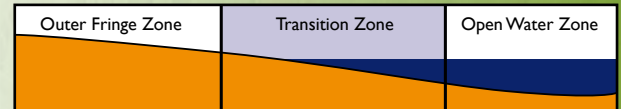
Tan to mid brown flower heads, December to May.

Habitat:

Grows in fresh or brackish water up to 2m deep, also found in billabongs, slow-flowing streams and lake margins.

Ecology:

Provides excellent habitat for wetland bird species such as Crakes, Rails and Bitterns. Indigenous inhabitants used it as a source of food, underground stems and new shoots were roasted and steamed. Fibres from the stems were used for basket weaving.





Running Marsh-flower (*Villarsia reniformis*)

Description:

Stems up to 1m tall. Thick succulent-feeling kidney shaped leaves.

Flower:

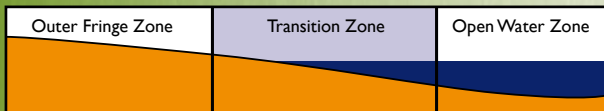
Large yellow flowers 3cm across, 5 petals with hairs on the end of each petal, September to February.

Habitat:

Shallow waters and the fringes of swamps and permanent or semi-permanent freshwater wetlands.

Ecology:

Provides egg-laying habitat for frogs as well as habitat for aquatic insect species.



Common Swamp Wallaby-grass

(*Amphibromus nervosus*)

Description:

Up to 1.2m tall with flat or inrolled, hairless rough feeling leaves.

Flower:

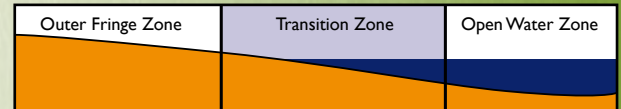
Tufted flower head, spikelets with 4-6 flowers, October to January.

Habitat:

Often growing in shallow freshwater meadows or on the fringe of wetlands.

Ecology:

Provides habitat for bird and frog species.





Tall Sedge (*Carex appressa*)

Description:

Up to 1.5m tall. Slender, bright green leaves to 6mm wide with rough edges.

Flower:

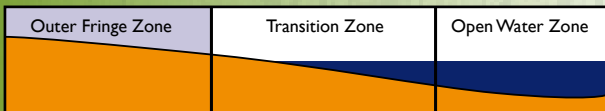
Brownish, dull yellow spikelets, September to November.

Habitat:

Common along creeks and on seasonally wet ground, reasonably drought tolerant.

Ecology:

Excellent cover for a variety of wetland and other birds utilising edges of wetlands. Historically used for basket weaving and a popular source of food for some butterfly caterpillars.



Common Tussock-grass (*Poa labillardierei*)

Description:

Up to 1m tall. Narrow leaves to 80cm tall.

Flower:

Open flower spikes, 2-4 flowers on short stalks, October to February.




Habitat:

Grows on the fringes of rivers, creeks, both shallow and deep wetlands, as well as swamp scrub.

Ecology:

Historically used for string and basket weaving. Is a popular food source for some species of butterfly caterpillar and provides excellent habitat for frogs, native swamp rats, bandicoots and the migratory Latham's Snipe.



Outer Fringe Zone	Transition Zone	Open Water Zone
		



Australian Government



References and Further Reading

Aquatic and Wetland Plants - Nick Romanowski - UNSW PRESS (1998)

Water & Wetland Plants For Southern Australia - Nick Romanowski - Lothian Books (1992)

Water Plants in Australia a Field Guide - G.R. Saintly & S.W.L. Jacobs - CSIRO (1994)

Draft Regional Wetland Plan - GHCA - Brett Lane & Associates Pty Ltd - June 2003

Viridans Biological Databases - www.viridans.com

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