

Spotting Seaweeds in Wales-brown seaweeds



There are around 120 brown seaweeds in Wales, although they often look more olive green. They are in a related group known as the Phaeophyceae. Try looking for some of these and share your finds with us on Twitter @CardiffCurator. Take care on the shore and plan your trip by the tides.

Find more nature guides or get in touch with our museum scientists for help with identification: museum.wales/collections/on-your-doorstep

007



Egg Wrack to 1.5 m*
Ascophyllum nodosum

This is common mid-way down sheltered shores and can completely cover rocky areas. Long, grey-green branches have single egg-shaped air sacs called bladders along them (arrowed above). Note that the similar Bladder Wrack has paired bladders.

To estimate the age of an Egg Wrack, count the bladders starting from the holdfast, where it attaches to rock, to the tip of the longest branch. 1 bladder = 1 year.



Toothed Wrack 40 cm*
Fucus serratus

Look for the toothed or jagged edges on this common brown seaweed. It covers rocks lower down on the shore.

Look for bumpy, sometimes orange, areas at the tips of the branches. These are the parts which release spores to continue the lifecycle of the seaweed.

Some people living near the coast collect seaweeds like this from the strandline to use as fertiliser for growing vegetables.



Bushy Rainbow Wrack 45 cm*
Cystoseira tamariscifolia

There are other Bushy Wracks, but this is the only one to show a bright rainbow colour (iridescence) under water. Out of water it is an olive green.

It grows in deep rock pools. In Wales, it is found in Anglesey and Pembrokeshire.

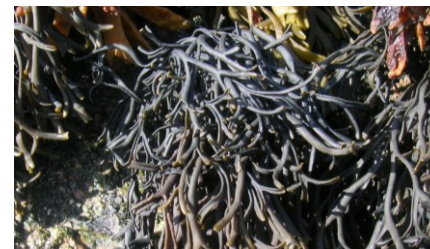
* Measurements give the length of the seaweed. However size is very variable in seaweeds, so these are a very rough guide.



Channel Wrack 15 cm*
Pelvetia canaliculata

If you don't want to get your feet wet, this is the one to look for first as it grows high up on the shore.

A green brown colour when wet (image above), dark brown when dry (below). Look for the channel made by the branches curling in at the sides. This helps to keep it moist when the tide goes out.



Wireweed 2 m*
Sargassum muticum

There are over 20 non-native seaweeds in Wales and most have been transported here accidentally by people.

Wireweed was found in the UK in 1973. It grows fast so it can out-compete other seaweeds.

Look for this seaweed in rock pools during the spring and summer, as it dies down in winter.

It has very long stringy branches with holly-like 'leaves' and small round air bladders.