

Equisetum ramosissimum Desf.

Branched Horsetail

Native/Alien

GB & England: Vulnerable

Schedule 8

GB Rare

VC5 Absent; VC6 Rare

An erect evergreen plant, with well-branched scabrous stems, this is the most frequent horsetail of ruderal areas in Southern Europe. Until recently the first occurrence in Britain was believed to be at a site near Boston, Lincolnshire, where it was found in 1947 on an artificially created river bank. It has been suggested that this species arrived here as a ballast alien (FitzGerald & Jermy, 1987). In Somerset, an unusual horsetail was observed in 1963 growing on sand along the base of the railings around the west part of Ellenborough Park in Weston-super-Mare. It was finally identified as *E. ramosissimum* in 1986, by Clive Jermy and Alison Paul (FitzGerald & Jermy, 1987). The species thrives at this site, just inland from the sea front, the park being a remnant of dune grassland enclosed over a century ago. Associated thermophilous species, such as *Cynodon dactylon*, support a theory that, in Somerset at least, this species may be a natural colonist (Rumsey & Spencer, 2012), although FitzGerald & Jermy (1987) suggested that it may have arrived with American troops returning from Europe in 1945. In 1971 this species was recorded at Whiteford Burrows, Glamorganshire by Franklyn Perring; in 2005 it was found at a development site by the River Usk in Newport, Gwent (Evans, 2006), where it did not persist and its status was uncertain (Rumsey & Spencer, 2012). Research on hybrids involving *E. ramosissimum* in Great Britain and Ireland provides more compelling evidence for native status, as does the recent re-determination of two herbarium specimens as this species, one collected on Hounslow Heath in 1705, the other from near Liverpool in the nineteenth century (Rumsey & Spencer, 2012). The Somerset site is the most southerly of the two extant populations.

VC6

Ellenborough Park	SSSI	ST317607	2011	FJR	Along S edge of SW corner of park
Ellenborough Park	SSSI	ST318607	2013	HJC, FJR	Abundant along S edge of park
Ellenborough Park	SSSI	ST319607	2013	HJC, FJR	Abundant along S edge of park
Ellenborough Park	SSSI	ST318608	2013	HJC, FJR	Scattered on N edge of park
Ellenborough Park	SSSI	ST319608	2013	HJC, FJR	Scattered on N edge of park



Equisetum ramosissimum at Ellenborough Park (2011). Photo: FJR