

## Conservation of critically endangered aquatic *Aponogeton jacobsenii* (Aponogetonaceae)

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Keywords: *Aponogeton jacobseni*, conservation, propagation, restoration

*Aponogeton jacobsenii* is a Critically Endangered aquatic plant confined to the central highlands of Sri Lanka. An extensively spread population is recorded in a single stream in the Horton Plains National Park. While the occupied area is well protected, any unforeseen changes to the stream could jeopardize populations. Therefore, the study initiated conservation by restoring populations in previously known and new habitats. Environmental parameters and flowering phenology were monitored; seeds and tubers were used as propagules. Tubers and seeds were planted/sown in trays filled with sand: coir dust:compost (1:1:1) in a plant propagator at the Hakgala Botanical Garden, and sprouting/germination was monitored. Phenological observations revealed that seeds are available throughout the year. Only 23% of the seeds germinated, and none of the tubers survived. Alternatively, seeds were placed in trays filled with sand and water at 3 cm depth. This method recorded significantly high ( $P < 0.01$ ) germination of 61 %. Germinated seeds were transferred into coir pellets and submerged in water. After four months, 62 % of plantlets survived and were ready for hardening. This was followed by the initial restoration. Long-term monitoring of the established plant populations will be carried out with the collaboration of park authorities, planters associations in the area and the participation of the local community to ensure the sustainability of the project. Upon successful restoration, this activity would, in the long term, contribute to the species being downgraded from its present threat category in the National Red List by increasing the number of populations in different locations.