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Pikea californica

[Synonyms : *Pikea pinnata*]

RED CALIFORNIAN SEAWEED is a seaweed. It is native to the south-western coast of North America.

It is also known as Californian red seaweed, Captain Pike's weed, and Pointed-tip candelabra. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 this species cannot be planted or caused to grow in the wild in Britain.

Californica means 'of or from California (United States)'

This species is not found on European shores apart from the Scilly Isles in the English Channel. Authorities suspect that it was introduced there during World War II. Catalina flying boats were obtained from a yard in San Diego and they were flown home from California to the Scilly Isles. Although this particular seaweed is not present near San Diego today reports of the 1950s indicate that seaplane hulls and floats were occasionally fouled with it. It has been suggested that this species could have attached itself to the canvas sea anchors aboard the Catalinas and if so it is believed that the weed could just have survived the journey (across North America and the Atlantic) – but there is plenty of doubt and the explanation of its singular appearance on Scilly Isle shores continues to be a matter of debate.