



Dilsea carnosa

Common names: Red rags, False dulse, Poor man's weather glass, Sea belt.

Irish name: Ceirteacha dearga.

Phylum: Rhodophyta
Class: Florideophyceae
Order: Gigartinales
Family: Dumontiaceae
Genus: *Dilsea*
Species: *D. carnosa*



Fig 1. Plants of *Dilsea carnosa* at low tide.

Morphology

- Red alga with a firm, leathery, flattened leaf-like fronds. Multiple fronds are oval in shape and arise from one common holdfast. It has a short cylindrical stipe of 1 cm long (approx.).
- The fronds can be up to 50 cm long and 25 cm wide.
- Thallus deep blood red in colour. Often becomes brick red to yellow-green at apical ends, in particular when reproducing.

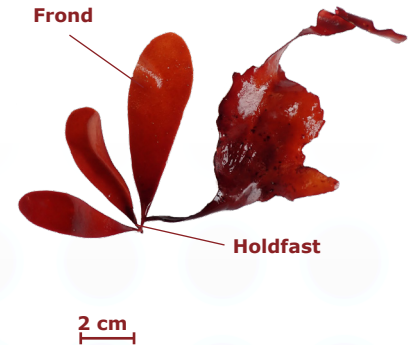


Fig 2. Morphology.

Reproduction

- *Dilsea carnosa* has two macroscopic phases in their life-cycle (see LC1*). Male and female structures occur on different plants.
 - ♀ Fertile female: cystocarps are small and are also found near the margins of young plants.
 - ♂ Fertile male: pale reproductive patches near young frond margins.
 - ⊕ Tetrasporophytes: tetraspores occur in indistinct sori near the margins of young parts of the plant.

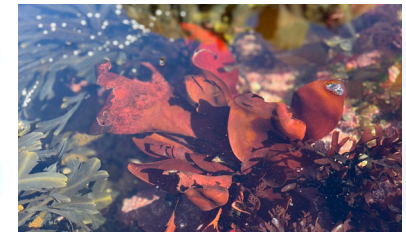


Fig 3. Reproductive edges of *Dilsea carnosa*.

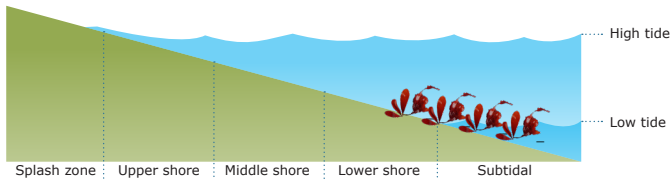
*Note: Life-cycle 1 (LC1) on page 3.



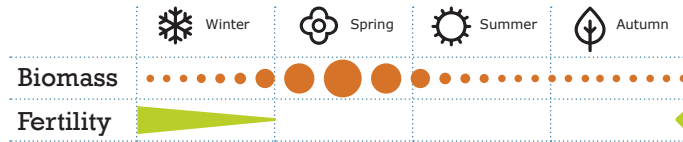
Dilsea carnosa

Distribution and habitat

- Around Ireland and the British Isles including the Shetlands and the Channel Islands. Portugal, Spain, France, the Baltic Sea (in salinities greater than 20‰), Norway and Iceland.
- Grows sporadically on rocks in shaded rock pools in the lower intertidal. More commonly in the subtidal zone, specially on rock in subtidal kelp forests as low as 24 m.



Seasonality



Note: These seasonal characteristics may vary slightly from year to year.

Wild resource and cultivation



interesting facts

- Known as False Dulse as it is often confused with *Palmaria palmata*.
- There are no records of it being used in Ireland, however it is a recognisable seaweed in beach-cast material after storms.
- The Danish name, Kødblad, translates as 'meat leaf' which aptly describes the frond which is fleshy in texture and red in colour.



© Pictures: Figs 1 to 3 by Irish Seaweed Consultancy.
© Illustration: Bruno Lanzarote.