

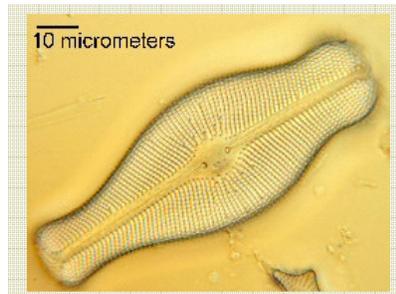
DIDYMO ALERT

The discovery of a non-native invasive algae, *Didymosphenia geminata* (otherwise known as Rock Snot or Didymo), in Vermont's White River and Connecticut River has scientists very concerned. Didymo can destroy the ecological balance of a river when it forms thick mats that smother native plants and aquatic insects. The resulting loss of food and habitat can have a devastating impact on fish populations. Once Didymo has invaded a waterway there is no known way to remove it. Therefore, it is critical that fishermen, boaters and other recreational users take steps to prevent its introduction into Massachusetts waterways.

Didymo (pronounced *did-dee-mo*) is a freshwater diatom that prefers cool, flowing, nutrient poor waters; however, it appears to be extending its range and adapting to alternate ecological zones. One theory for its increased invasiveness is climate change, which has resulted in warmer winters and greater UV radiation (Kilroy, 2004). Didymo was first discovered in New Zealand, where it spread to 12 rivers in just 18 months; however, this is the first known occurrence of this species in the northeastern United States. At this time there are no known populations of Didymo in Massachusetts.

Didymo attaches to plants, rocks and other substrates with a stalk. Colonies can start out as a single microscopic organism but quickly develop into visible circular clumps. Although generally brown or tan in color, large mats of Didymo may appear gray or white as the stalk tips fray. Didymo looks slimy and cloud-like, yet to the touch it has a rough fibrous texture similar to wool or a cotton ball. Mats of Didymo that cover the substrate often resemble clumps or layers of tissue paper, and when growing on plants Didymo may develop into rope-like strands. In comparison, native algae is usually slimy and gelatinous.

To help prevent its spread, all hard surfaces (paddles, kayaks etc) need to be washed with hot (140⁰ F) soapy water, a 2% bleach solution or a 5% mixture of salt, dish soap or hand soap for one full minute. Soft surface items (ex. felt bottom waders) need to be soaked for 30 minutes in hot soapy water. Anglers and boaters are encouraged to be on the lookout and to report any suspicious algae.



Please report sightings to Michelle Robinson at michelle.robinson@state.ma.us

Information and photos were obtained from:
<http://www.epa.gov/region8/water/didymosphenia/>
<http://www.issg.org/database/species/ecology.asp?si=775&fr=1&sts>