



Didymosphenia geminata

Common Name(s):

Didymo, rock snot

Current Threat Status (2009):

Exotic

Habitat:

It can form massive blooms on the bottom of oligotrophic streams, river and occasionally lakes. Found naturally in northern Europe and North America. In New Zealand found in lower Waiiau and Mararoa Rivers and Hawea River.

Features:

Didymo is a member of the group of single-celled aquatic plants (freshwater algae) known as diatoms. It is made up of cells that cannot be seen with the naked eye until large dense colonies have formed (algal blooms). Diatoms are unique in that their cell walls contain silica (silicon dioxide or sand), which is why Didymo feels gritty when touched. Didymo also contains chlorophyll, a pigment which enables it to make its own food by using energy from the sun. Under optimum growing conditions, Didymo cells ooze large amounts of a mucus-like substance (mucilage) which attaches Didymo firmly to underwater surfaces. The algae can form a thick brown layer that smothers rocks, submerged plants and other materials. It forms flowing "dreadlocks" that can turn white at their ends and look similar to tissue paper. Although appearing slimy to the touch it feels like wet cotton wool. More comprehensive information can be found in the NIWA report on BNZ website or on the Invasive Species website: <http://issg.appfa.auckland.ac.nz/database/welcome/> and type in Didymosphenia

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=4131



Caption: Didymo

Photographer: MaF



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