

STARRY STONEWORT

Nitellopsis obtusa

SPECIES + ORIGIN:

Starry stonewort (SSW) is native to Europe and western Asia. It was likely introduced to the

Great Lakes via ballast water carried in transoceanic ships. SSW is a green, robust macroalgae that can grow up to 2 meters tall.

It is anchored in sediment by colorless filaments (rhizoids) that contain up to several dozen star-shaped bulbils.



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Credit: Vermont Invasives

IMPACTS:

By forming dense mats of vegetation, SSW can greatly reduce the diversity of aquatic plants in a waterbody. It can also impede the movement of fish or other aquatic life and decrease spawning activity. Mats growing to the surface may reduce water flow and make recreational activities difficult. Removing or removing SSW is extremely difficult and expensive. Abundant bulbils on the rhizoids can dislodge if disturbed; bulbils and any fragmented piece of SSW will sprout new individuals. Some chemical herbicides and algaecides have been effective at suppressing SSW, but fail to affect the bulbils under the sediment. SSW has not been fully eradicated in any infested water to date - prevention is the cheapest option.

MEANS OF SPREAD:

Fragments of SSW can easily spread between waterbodies via watercraft, trailers, and anchors holding sediment. Local dispersal occurs by bulbils or fragments being transported by boats or water currents within a waterbody. Only male SSW exists in the U.S.; no viable "seeds" are produced. SSW spreads easily when chopped up by boat motors at public water accesses, where it is most commonly found.

BULBIL



Credit: Vermont Invasives

HOW TO IDENTIFY:

SSW has whorls of 4-6 branchlets; some branchlets may appear forked due to short bracts where reproductive structures form. White, star-shaped bulbils are produced in the sediment, and give SSW its name. It is much more robust than native chara; when held out of water, SSW holds its rigid stature. Many native chara look very similar to SSW - use a plant identifying app or consult a specialist if you suspect you've found SSW.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Like most AIS, humans are the primary vector of transport from one waterbody to another. SSW can be unknowingly carried on fishing gear, boating equipment, or in very small amounts of water in a watercraft. The easiest, most effective means to ensure you are not moving SSW is to make sure that your vessel, and all gear, is Clean, Drained, and Dried before moving to a new waterbody. Be vigilant by checking boat motors and anchors before launching.

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