

Didymosphenia Geminata Report

What feels like wet cotton, looks like a sewage spill, and is really strong? Well, it is *Didymosphenia geminata*, A.K.A “rock snot”, or “didymo”. We are studying didymo because it is affecting our rivers and streams. What is, Didymo? It is a single celled algae that is spreading into our rivers in Vermont. YUCK! Who would want that in their rivers? It’s native to Europe and North America and as you know, looks gross, really gross.

Didymo is different than other algae. It looks slimy, but it is spongy and scratchy. It attaches to rocks and plants. Didymo starts off as a single cell and grows into stalks which keep weaving into mats that get up to 10 inches thick. Now, have you ever wondered what didymo looks like? Well, you have come to the right place as a I’m now a didymo expert. As you know, it looks like sewage spill and wet toilet paper flowing in the water. Now you may be thinking to yourself, I thought algae was blue or green, but you are wrong. This Didymo is yellow-brown or it can be white. It also looks like rat tails flowing in the water. It may look like it feels slimy and maybe sticky, but you are wrong again. It feels like wet cotton or wool and it is scratchy. Talk about strong, didymo is really strong compared to most algae. Most of the other algae, if you rub it between your fingers, will break or separate, but not *Didymosphenia geminata*. You have to pull it apart. Mostly people are spreading the didymo and that caused the outbreak of didymo. I know didymo is gross, but please read more.

Now I am allowed to talk about the history to you. In order for didymo to grow/live it needs the following: PH 7, stable flow to attach to rocks, high light levels, but has been found in low levels in North America and Europe, warm water , shallow water depth, and freshwater. It has heavy mats that are mostly made of stalks, which are the thing didymo uses to attach to rocks. The common place you can find didymo, beside rivers or streams, is below dams. People are spreading it with their fishing gear. The single cell gets into the felt waders, then when the fisherman goes to a different river or stream, the cell leaves the wader and attaches to rocks and starts to spread.

All in all, *didymosphenia geminata* is changing history. I know a lot about didymo and now you do too. I think that didymo is gross. I need to act, you do too. I hope you learned about history and will take better care of our river.

Bibliography

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