



Water Resources Division's Aquatic Invasive Species of the Week!

FOR THE WEEK OF:
August 11-17, 2014

Starry Stonewort
Nitellopsis obtusa

Origin: Native to Europe and Asia

Current Distribution: Starry stonewort was first reported in Lake St. Clair Michigan in 1986. It can now be found in lakes in the lower peninsula, particularly the southern region. It is usually seen from July to October.

Means of Introduction: It was likely introduced by ballast water and spread by boats and/or waterfowl.

Description: Although it looks like a rooted aquatic plant, starry stonewort is a macroalga. It has tiny star shaped bulbils, an irregular branching pattern, and can reach up to 33 inches. A similar looking species is the native plant Chara, however Chara feels brittle and scaly and often has an odor similar to a skunk's spray.

Habitat: Slow moving waters ranging in depths from 3 feet to 95 feet.

Impacts: Thick mats of starry stonewort cover lake bottoms that effectively block fish access to suitable spawning habitats. It can easily outcompete native vegetation.

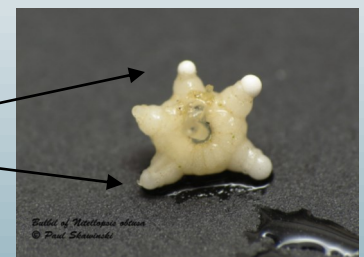
Interesting Note: In the United Kingdom, starry stonewort is considered to be among the most severely threatened group of plants or animals— much different than Michigan's perspective!



Native Chara (left), Starry stonewort (right).



Photo: Grand Valley State University



Up close photo of a star shaped bulbil.

For more information on Michigan's Aquatic Invasive Species Program,
please visit: www.michigan.gov/aquaticinvasives