

Nitella opaca

COMMON NAME

Stonewort

SYNONYMS

Nitella flexilis

FAMILY

Characeae

AUTHORITY

Nitella opaca (Bruzellius) Agardh

FLORA CATEGORY

Non-vascular – Native

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Small branched submerged plant with easily punctured stems and branches. Distinctive forked branches.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: Central North Island. Europe, America.

HABITAT

Central North Island lakes.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Aquatic, submerged, macro-algae. Simple, lax appearance (0.3-0.4 m). Regular, once forked branchlets arise in whorls from central stems, which are anchored in the sediment by colourless rhizoids. Stem and branchlets are comprised of strings of single cells that are easily punctured. The branchlet beyond the fork is comprised of single cells. Plant is dioecious, with only female plants encountered in New Zealand and, although contracted fruiting heads form, no oospores have been seen.

SIMILAR TAXA

Like *Nitella opaca*, *N. stuartii* has single cells comprising the branchlet beyond the fork, but has an additional branchlet tier at each whorl, compared to the simple whorl in *N. opaca*.

FRUITING

Conspicuous contracted fruiting heads only bear oogonia. No oospores seen.

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Fragments only?

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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Casanova, M.T.; de Winton, M.D.; Karol, K.G.; Clayton J.S. (2007). *Nitella hookeri* A. Braun (Characeae, Charophyceae) in New Zealand and Australia: implications for endemism, speciation and biogeography. Charophytes (1): 2-18

de Winton, M.D.; Dugdale, A.M.; Clayton, J.S. (2007). An identification key for oospores of the extant charophytes of New Zealand. New Zealand Journal of Botany:463-476

Wood RD, Mason R 1977. Characeae of New Zealand. New Zealand Journal of Botany 15: 87–180.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/nitella-opaca/>

