

## INVASIVE WEED OF THE MONTH

### ***Love to fish? Paddle? Watch out for didymo!***

*From Brodhead Watershed Association*



*Photo cutline: Didymo, otherwise known as rock snot. (Tim Daley/PA DEP photo)*

Invasive plants can clog and injure all kinds of habitats. Gardens, forests — and creeks and streams, too.

The 50-cent word for one such invasive aquatic plant is *Didymosphenia geminata*. Most people know it as didymo or, because of its slimy appearance, rock snot.

In fact, it isn't slimy. The visual "ewwww" factor is high, but to the touch, its texture is more like moist cotton or wool. Didymo thrives in cool, clear streams like ours, and according to *American Angler* "forms massive blooms resembling shag carpet," that can be 8 inches thick. It smothers plants and rocks, fouling the clean gravel trout need to lay eggs, and out-competes the native diet of mayflies, stoneflies, and caddisflies — which trout feed on. It may bury freshwater mussels completely.

Didymo is overwhelming waterways and waterbodies in at least 18 states, including Pennsylvania. It's been found in the main stem of the Delaware River, Dyberry Creek in Wayne County, and elsewhere. Fortunately, so far, experienced anglers haven't seen it in the Brodhead Watershed.

But didymo spreads easily and infects new waters when an unsuspecting kayaker or angler transplants even a few cells from an infected waterway.

**KEEPING IT OUT OF OUR LOCAL CREEKS REQUIRES VIGILANCE** every time you fish, kayak or otherwise enter the water. You need to Check, Clean, Drain and Dry:

**Check:** Before leaving the river, remove obvious clumps of algae from boots, tackle, boats or clothing — and look for hidden clumps. Leave them at the site. If you find clumps later, don't wash them down the drain. Instead, leave them to dry completely before discarding in the trash.

**Clean:** Soak and scrub gear for at least one minute in either hot (120° F) water, a 2% solution of household bleach, antiseptic hand cleaner, or dishwashing detergent.

**Drain:** Boat owners should drain all equipment and boats, including motor, bilge, live well and portable bait containers before leaving a waterway.

**Dry:** If cleaning is not practical, allow the gear and equipment, such as neoprene waders, felt-soled waders or clothing, to dry completely. Then wait at least 48 hours before using them in any other waterway.

And don't dump leftover bait into the water you're fishing or even on the land, unless you collected the bait there. Put it in the trash.

For information on slowing the spread of aquatic invasive species, visit <https://extension.psu.edu/slow-the-spread-of-aquatic-invasive-species>

*More on invasive plants can be found at [brodheadwatershed.org/invasive-species-management-plan/](http://brodheadwatershed.org/invasive-species-management-plan/)*