

Chara australis

COMMON NAME

Stonewort

SYNONYMS

Chara corallina

FAMILY

Characeae

AUTHORITY

Chara australis R. Brown

FLORA CATEGORY

Non-vascular – Native

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Small branched submerged plant with easily punctured stems and branches, often with bright orange structures at the base of upper branches

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North, South Island. Also Australia.

HABITAT

Lakes and slow flowing waters.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Aquatic, submerged, macro-algae. Often a tall (0.3-0.5 m), stiff plant, which is easily crushed. Simple, not 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 large single cells that are easily punctured. Small accessory cells at junctions between branchlet cells are not obvious. Plant is dioecious, with large orange antheridia and pale oogonia on separate plants and with fruiting bodies dispersed over the upper stem portions. The plant is particularly conspicuous when orange, male fruiting bodies (antheridia) are abundant.

SIMILAR TAXA

Differs from *Chara* sp. aff. *muelleri* in being dioecious and having only one end cell on branchlet ends, while the former is monoecious and has a corona of 2-3 cells. Spines can usually be seen in abnormal freshwater forms of *Lamprothamnium* that otherwise resemble small plants of *C. australis*.

FRUITING

Produces large (>500µm long) black oospores that are round in transverse section. Oospore has 5-6 sinistral spiralling ridges.

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Fragments or oospores.

ETYMOLOGY

chara: Origin unknown, possibly from the Greek *charis* 'grace' or 'beauty'

australis: Southern

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/chara-australis/>