

PLANT-LIKE ALGAE

Species: *Chara* spp., muskgrass, stonewort, muskwort

Family: Characeae

NATIVE

Leaf: Algae lack true leaves. Six to 16 leaf-like branchlets of equal length grow in whorls around the stem, and are never divided. These branchlets often bear tiny thorn-like projections, which give the plant a rough or prickly appearance when magnified. Produces foul, musty almost garlic-like odor if crushed.



Stem: Algae lack true stems. Round, stem-like structure varies from 5 cm to over 1 m in length.

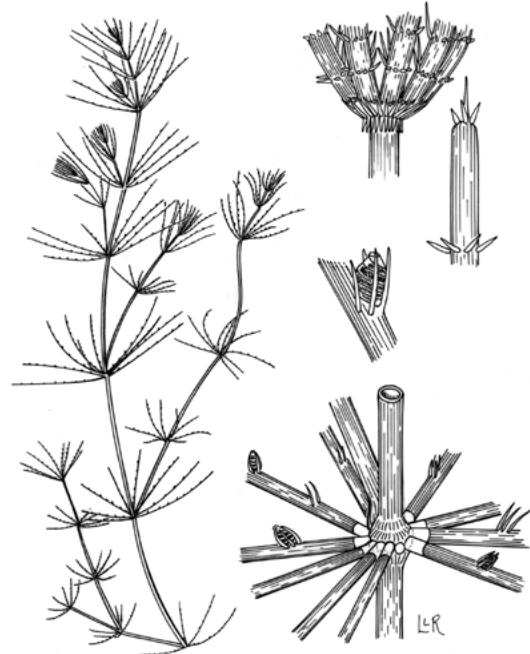
Flower: Algae do not produce flowers; microscopic one-celled sex organs called oogonia are formed. These tiny organs and patterns in the cases that surround them are used to distinguish between species.

Fruit: Algae do not produce fruits. Tiny spores are produced in fruiting bodies. In some muskgrass species the fruiting bodies are orange and very conspicuous.

Root: Muskgrasses may be attached to the bottom by root-like structure called holdfasts.

Propagation: Spores carried by water and waterfowl; plant fragments.

Habitat: Fresh to brackish water, inland and costal, in both shallow and deep water. In Montana, this spp. is always found in calcareous water. Some species found in alkaline lakes and slow-moving streams. Muskgrasses will often grow in deeper water than vascular aquatic plants.



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Species: *Nitella* spp., nitella, brittlewort

Family: Characeae

NATIVE

Leaf: No true leaves. 6-8 evenly forked branchlets grow in whorls at regularly spaced intervals along the 'stem'. Branchlets have a smooth texture.



Stem: No true stems. Hollow, stem-like structures have whorls of forked branches along their entire length. No odor when crushed.

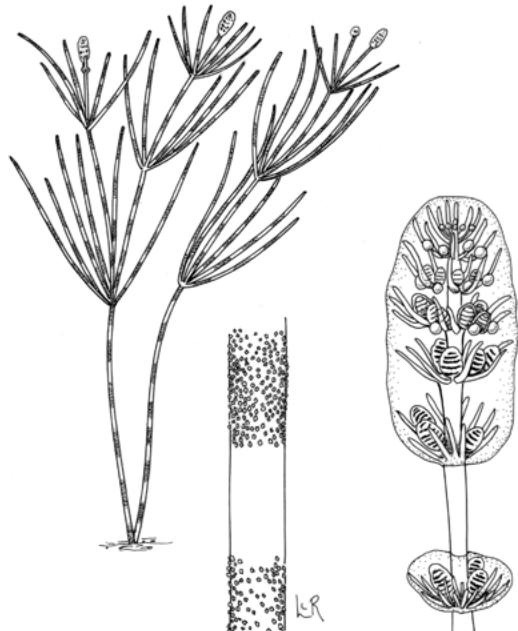
Flower: Does not bear flowers. Has microscopic spore-producing organs. Male organs grow at the base of the branchlets. Female organs are in a cluster on the sides of the branchlets below the male organs.

Fruit: Produces spores rather than fruits.

Root: Lacks roots. May be attached to the bottom by root-like structures called holdfasts or floating free above the sediment.

Propagation: Spreads by spores transported by wildlife and will also form new plants from vegetative fragments.

Habitat: Grows in shallow to deep waters of soft water or acid lakes and bogs. Often grow in deeper water than flowering plants and frequently form a thick carpet or grow in clumps along the bottom.



Tony Rodd, Flickr