

GUIDE TO MARINE INVADERS IN RI COASTAL WATERS

Styela clava club tunicate (sea squirt, ascidian)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

- Club-shaped with two siphons; anchored to substrate by a stalk
- Tough, leathery, bumpy exterior; often covered with other organisms
- Up to 8 in (20 cm) with stalk approximately 1/3 of its total length



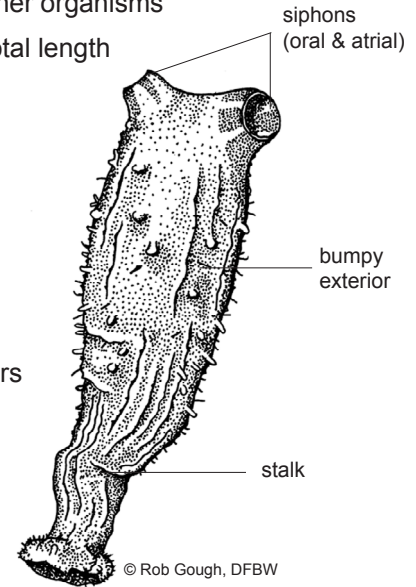
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HABITAT PREFERENCE

- Found in shallow subtidal waters on hard surfaces
- Abundant within sheltered areas like docks and harbors



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Styela clava

club tunicate (sea squirt, ascidian)

INVASION STATUS & ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS

Abundant in sheltered, subtidal waters attached to hard surfaces, *Styela clava* was introduced from Japan into Newport Harbor, California in the 1920s, where it went unidentified until 1933. By 1949, it was one of the two dominant tunicates in the bay, replacing native solitary tunicates. It first appeared in Long Island Sound, Connecticut in 1973 and rapidly spread north to Prince Edward Island and south to New Jersey. This species is a tough competitor for settlement space and food and is a fouling organism on ship hulls, mussels, and oyster beds. The transport of oysters and the movement of ships has probably advanced its rapid dispersal.

SIMILAR SPECIES

Molgula manhattensis
Sea grape

- Translucent gray or greenish-blue
- Often occurring in dense clusters
- Encrusted with debris
- More rounded shape than *Styela clava*

Boltenia ovifera
Stalked sea squirt, sea onion

- White, tan, orange or red bulb-like body
- Translucent stalk two to four times longer than body
- Entire animal reaching 12 in (30 cm) or more in length
- Siphons on one side; incurrent aimed upwards, excurrent aimed downward

Stalked sea squirts, *Boltenia ovifera*, (right) have a stouter, more bulb-like shape than club tunicates, *Styela clava*.



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