

CHAPTER I
Introduction



Characeae is a family of freshwater green algae which is variously known as stoneworts, brittleworts, muskgrass, bassweed and Chara. It is a remarkable group of Cryptogams which stand isolated, having no clear affinity to any other group of algae. It was considerably separated from other green algae by the complexity of its sexual reproductive organs, the occurrence of a protonemal stage in the development of zygote, and certain features of its vegetative organization. Most of the Characeae grow submerged in still freshwater above muddy or sandy bottom, and some in brackish water.

Characeae is widely distributed throughout the world. Many species are tropical and temperate habitats. In Asia, Characeae can be found in India, Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines and also Thailand. However, the Characeae of Thailand have got very little attention. Only few works have been done. The Thai common names of this weed are " Sarai Fai, Mahd Fai, and Sai Ront " which mean hot weed or fire-weed. The farmers believe that this weed interferes the growth of rice in paddy field by producing heat which may change the color of rice crop into yellow and die. Therefore, more attentions and studies on this group of weeds must be concentrated. The correct identification of the species is necessary before doing any other research work on this group of algae.