

Algae

Most people who want to learn about algae, want to learn how to get rid of it. See our *Algae Management* article for that topic. This article describes some of the characteristics of algae and its role in aquatic ecosystems.

Two types of algae

Planktonic algae are single cell organisms that usually float in the top 15" of the water, looks like pea soup and sometimes produce a pungent odor. This type has the most potential to kill fish in your lake.

Filamentous algae are stringy forms that start growing on the bottom in shallow water, then float up forming mats across the lake surface as they mature.

What is an algae bloom?

A bloom is simply a lot of algae growing really fast. This is the most common complaint from people who live near stormwater ponds.

Besides looking unattractive, some algae blooms die off quickly. This large quantity of decomposing algae, particularly planktonic algae can deplete the oxygen in the lake, suffocating fish and other animals.

Blooms are a natural part of environmental cycles, but nutrient input (fertilizer & grass clippings) increases algae blooms significantly.

What makes algae grow so much?

Long, hot, sunny days and lots of nutrients in the water

Florida certainly produces more algae than Michigan or Connecticut due to our climate. There isn't anything we can do about that. But we can reduce the nutrients entering our lakes to "starve" the algae.

Problem vs. symptom

Most of the time algae is only a problem in the eye of the beholder. Unattractive as it is, algae growth is not a symptom of a dead or polluted lake. Excessive algae growth is a symptom of very fertile water, usually from over fertilized lawns.

The exact type of algae helps us determine the best form of lake management for your lake.

An ounce of prevention

Whether you live on the lake or not; you can help reduce excessive algae growth by reducing nutrients that flow into the lake. Read "Green Lawns, Blue Ponds" to learn about landscaping practices that protect the health and beauty of your lake.

How to get rid of algae

A lake is not a swimming pool. A little algae is a natural part of lakes, especially in Florida.

Usually lakes with a variety of plants in the water have far less algae. See our article *Algae Management*.

Algae trivia

28,000 alga species worldwide

7,000 species native to Florida

Certain algae grow 500 feet long

Others are 20 times smaller than the thickness of a human hair.

Some grow in 180° water