

IDENTIFYING A HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM (HAB)

This quick guide provides a visual comparison of appearance and color and odor that can be helpful in distinguishing non-toxic green algae and aquatic plants from potentially toxic cyanobacteria blooms or harmful algal blooms (HABs).

Non-toxic Algae & Plants

Cyanobacteria/HAB

APPEARANCE



Rooted Plants



Floating Plants



Plant-like Algae



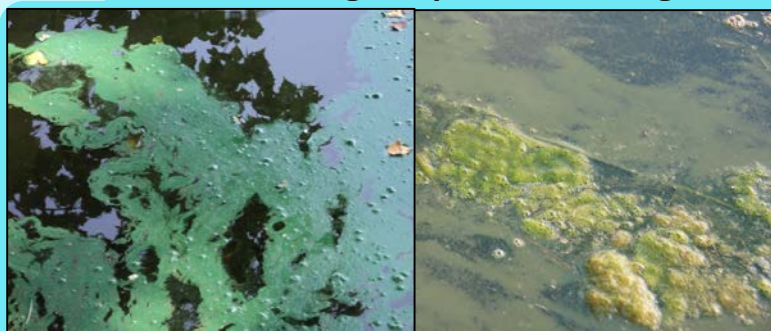
Filamentous Algae



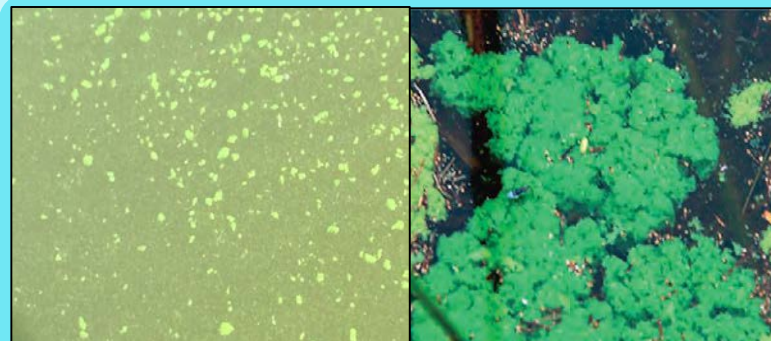
Paint or Soup



Scum, Bubbling or Spit-like Floating Foam



Lettuce or Chopped Grass



Spires



Mats



Blobs



Non-toxic Algae & Plants

Cyanobacteria/HAB

COLOR



Algae and aquatic plants are usually green but can appear yellow or brown as they die down.



Cyanobacteria get their name from their blue-green pigment but blooms can often look green, blue-green, green-brown, or red.



ODOR



Algae and aquatic plants are usually neutral or leafy in scent, but when dying or dead smell musty/rotting.



Cyanobacteria blooms can have a distinctive smell, sometimes described as gasoline, septic or fishy.

Have you seen a HAB?



Report HABs online! <http://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/do/bloomreport.html>



Or call 1(844) 729-6466



Find out more on the California HABs Portal
<http://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs>

Need more help with identification?

<http://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/resources/field.html>