



FILAMENTOUS ALGAE

What is filamentous algae?

Filamentous algae is a small green aquatic plant. The filaments often tangle together to form long, stringy, hair-like strands that can form green, slimy or cotton-like mats on the surface. Filamentous algae are a natural part of Minnesota lakes and provides cover for small aquatic insect and animals that are important food sources for fish.

What causes algae blooms?

Algae blooms, or large amounts of algae, are caused by high water temperature, excess phosphorus, and too few algae grazers. Phosphorus is attached to soil particles and then dissolved in the water when the soil runs off during rainstorms. It can also come from seepage due to failing septic systems. One pound of phosphorus can result in the growth of 500 pounds of algae! The reduction of aquatic plants can also contribute, since the plants will not be using up the nutrients that then feed the algae.

Filamentous algae vs. blue-green algae

Filamentous algae is a true algae that forms greenish mats on the water's surface, and has a slimy or cotton-like appearance. and while filamentous algae may affect enjoyment of the lake it does not pose any health risks. Blue-green algae can be difficult to distinguish, but often looks like pea soup or spilled green paint, although it can take other forms. Blue-green algae can produce toxins that are harmful to fish and animals, including cattle, dogs and humans, so the safest course of action is to avoid any contact.

Controlling filamentous algae

The life cycle of filamentous algae is 30 to 60 days. However, long-term control of Filamentous algae relies on prevention. Large algae blooms often are the result of excess nutrients such as phosphorus entering the water. Reducing the nutrient flow into the water can control algae blooms. Some short-term solutions are a DNR permit for herbicide treatment of algae or mechanically skimming algae off the surface.

Keeping phosphorus out of the lake

Maintain a vegetated buffer along your shoreline, capture dirty stormwater in a raingarden before it enters the lake, regularly inspect your septic system, and consider joining the Citizen Advisory Council of the Comfort Lake Forest-Lake Watershed District.

Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District

Protecting and improving your local water resources

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