

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



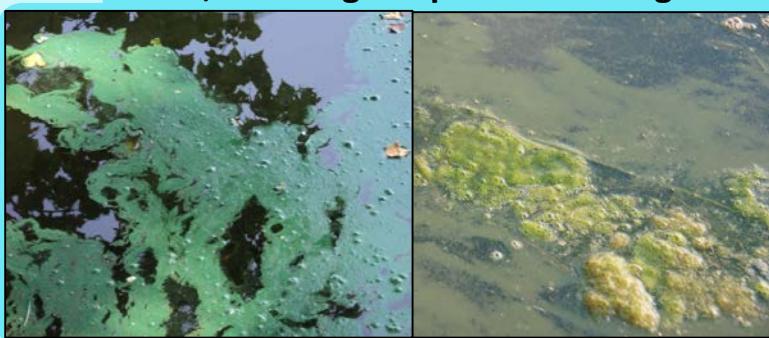
Paint or Soup



Floating Plants



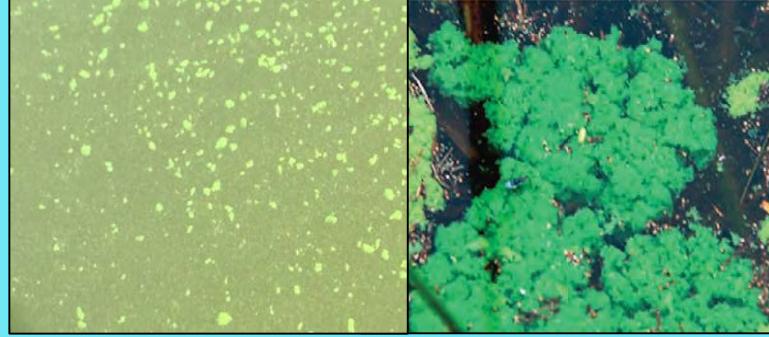
Scum, Bubbling or Spit-like Floating Foam



Plant-like Algae



Lettuce or Chopped Grass



Filamentous Algae



Spires



Mats



Blobs



Non-toxic Algae & Plants

Cyanobacteria/HAB

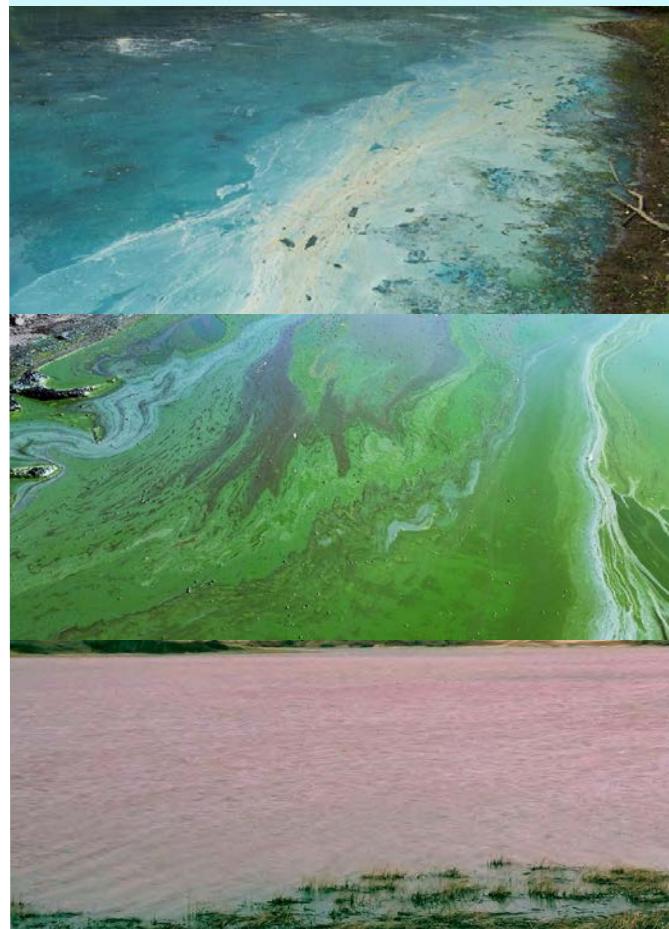
COLOR



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



Cyanobacteria get their name from their blue 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>