

IS IT BLUE-GREEN ALGAE

...OR SOMETHING ELSE?

Blue-green algae are bacteria known as *cyanobacteria* and are a natural part of water bodies. With enough sunlight and nutrients, cyanobacteria can grow quickly and form a blue-green algae *bloom*.

- Blooms often look like spilled paint or pea soup and can change the color of the water to green, blue, turquoise, purple, tan, or white.
- **Blue-green algae can produce toxins that can make people and animals sick.**
- In Wisconsin, blooms are most common in the summer, or May to September.
- Blooms have look-alikes, so use your best judgment when choosing a spot to swim. Do not swim in discolored water or where you see foam, scum, or algal mats.

HARMFUL



Green water that looks like pea soup



Surface scum that looks like spilled paint



Floating globs or mats

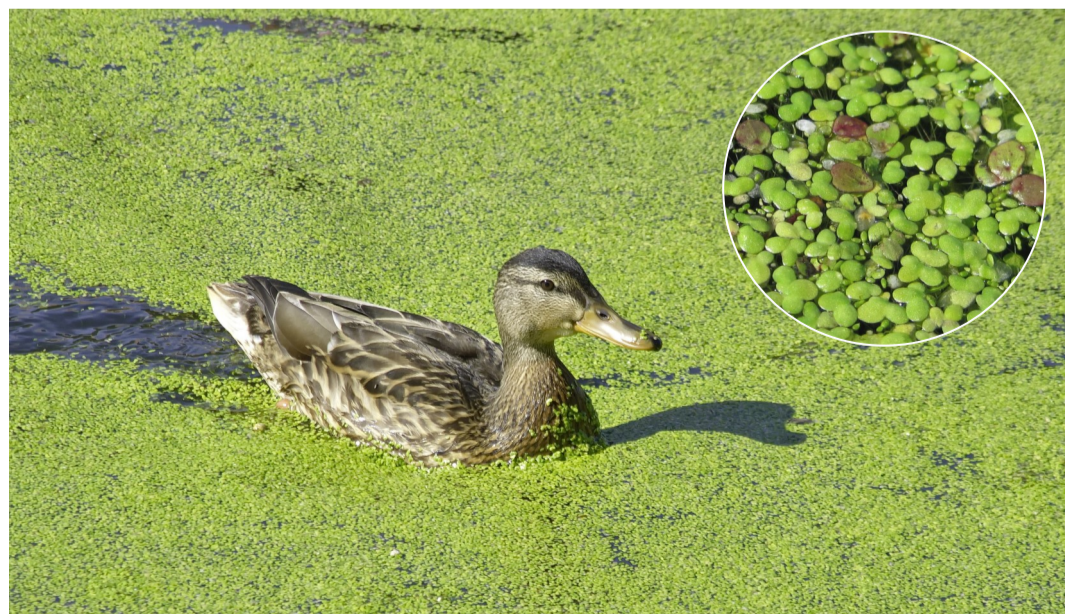
NOT HARMFUL



Long, hair-like filamentous green algae



Yellow plant pollen



Tiny, green floating plants (duckweed)



To learn more about blue-green algae and their health effects, visit www.dhs.wi.gov and search "algae"

Wisconsin Department of Health Services
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