

IDENTIFICATION GUIDE:

Black Mat Algae

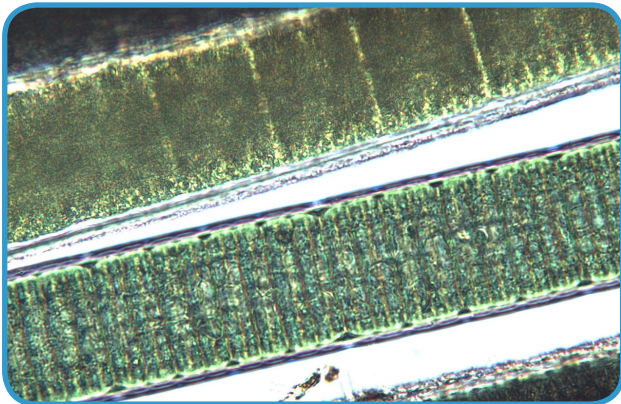
fact sheet



Dense mats of *Lyngbya wollei*



Lyngbya wollei has thick filaments.



Lyngbya wollei filaments magnified

Algal group:

Cyanophyta (cyanobacteria, filamentous blue-greens)

Scientific Name:

Lyngbya wollei

Description:

This type of algae forms dense mats and has a strong musty smell. When handled, it feels like wet wool or cotton. Clumps are difficult to pull apart. Healthy mats are usually blue-black but turn yellow-green under intense light.

Habitat:

Black mat algae grows at the bottom of slow moving freshwaters. Mats sometimes rise to the surface and accumulate at the water's edge to maximize photosynthesis and continue growing. Very large mats can accumulate if they do not die off over winter. It is possible for mats to grow for years underwater before appearing on the surface.

Significance:

Black mat algae is becoming especially common in the southeastern United States and is known to cause nuisance infestations in ponds, lakes, and reservoirs. Surface mats have been known to cover entire ponds. It can clog water intakes, cause foul odors, reduce the recreational value of a water body, and create an unsightly appearance. Black mat algae as well as *Lyngbya majuscul*, its relative that lives in brackish water, are known to have toxic strains that may cause skin irritation. There have been no known health problems associated with *Lyngbya* in North Carolina.

North Carolina Division of Water Resources

Learn more: www.algae.nc.gov