



Cryptomonads may be yellow, olive-green, red or colorless.

Algal Group:

Cryptophyta

Description:

Cryptomonads are asymmetrical and single-celled organisms with two whip-like tails (flagellae) that propel them through the water. They can range in color from yellow to olive-green to red, while some are even colorless. Many cryptomonads look similar and cannot be positively identified without a scanning electron microscope.

Habitat:

Cryptomonads are found throughout the year in fresh, marine and estuarine waters. The waters can be flowing or non-flowing, warm or cold, nutrient rich or nutrient poor.

Significance:

Cryptomonads are some of the most common algae in North Carolina. It is a rare occasion when they are not found during analysis of a body of water. Cryptomonads are an important food source for many aquatic organisms and are even eaten by other algae, such as dinoflagellates. They are known to form blooms that may discolor the water and cause taste and odor problems.