

## IDENTIFICATION GUIDE:

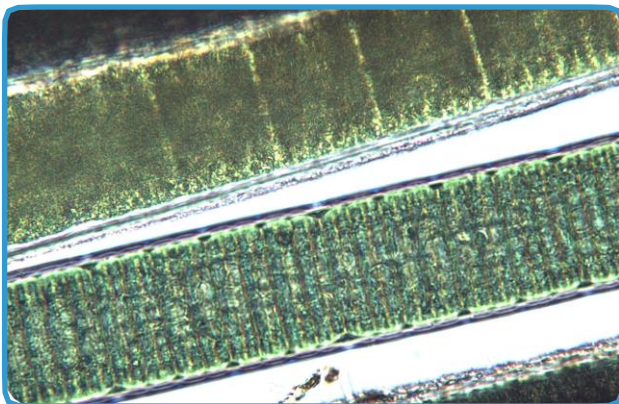
# Black Mat Algae fact sheet



Dense mats of *Lyngbya wollei*



*Lyngbya wollei* has thick filaments.



*Lyngbya wollei* filaments magnified

### Algal group:

Cyanophyta (cyanobacteria, filamentous blue-greens)

### Scientific Names:

*Lyngbya wollei*, *Microseria 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 grow 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 are becoming common in the southeastern United States and are known to cause nuisance infestations in ponds, lakes, and reservoirs. Surface mats have been known to cover entire ponds. Black mat algae 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 Department of Environmental Quality Division of Water Resources

Learn more: [www.algae.nc.gov](http://www.algae.nc.gov)