

## IDENTIFICATION GUIDE:

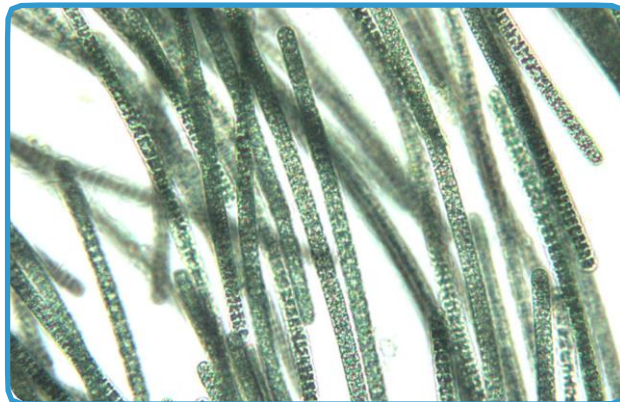
# Oscillatoria fact sheet



*Oscillatoria* can look like spilled paint.



*Oscillatoria* mat in early morning (left) and mid-afternoon (right).



*Oscillatoria* filaments magnified.

### Algal Group:

Cyanophyta

### Scientific Name:

*Oscillatoria*

### Description:

*Oscillatoria* is a filamentous blue-green alga, or type of cyanobacteria, that can be found throughout North Carolina. Its filaments are motile and weave into thin mats that coat sediment and other submerged surfaces. The bright blue and blue-green mats are commonly described as looking like spilled paint. As mats get older and thicker, clumps break free and float to the surface. The clumps rise during the day as the algae photosynthesize and produce oxygen, before sinking back to the bottom at night when oxygen levels drop.

### Habitat:

*Oscillatoria* is found in the shallow waters of lakes, ponds, ditches, and slow flowing rivers. *Oscillatoria* tends to be more prevalent in waters that are rich in organic matter during the summer when water temperatures have warmed.

### Significance:

Blue-green algae are notorious for causing taste and odor problems in drinking water. Although unsightly, most mats are not known to pose any environmental or human health risks. However, there are some species of *Oscillatoria* and related forms of filamentous cyanobacteria that have been shown to produce toxins. There have been no recorded adverse human health effects attributed to *Oscillatoria* in North Carolina.

North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality Division of Water Resources

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

