

TEAM **K**EANE

Sculling School

Blue Green Algae & How to Spot It!

When the weather gets warmer, blue green algae appears on our canals, rivers and reservoirs. This can be harmful to both people and animals. If you spend time near water, it's important to understand some basic facts to keep yourself and your family safe.

What is it?

Firstly, blue green algae (BGA) is not actually algae, but it looks like it. In reality it's many tiny bacteria that can't be seen with the naked eye.

When the bacteria group together, they form large clumps, which look very much like floating algae.

What does it look like?

Blue green algae

BGA can take many forms. It's most recognisable as a shimmering blue-green layer on the surface of the water. At its peak, it can create a much more obvious scum.

It can also appear as green streaks on the surface and as tiny green specks within the water. Sometimes it makes the water look a different colour.



When and where would I see it?

Warm weather helps BGA to grow, so you're most likely to see it during the summer months.

It usually occurs in still waters where there isn't much flow, such as reservoirs and quieter canals. You might also see it when there hasn't been any rain for a while.

Why is it a problem?

When BGA grows excessively and reaches the stage of producing scum on the water's surface, it can sometimes produce toxins. This causes a problem if animals drink the water. There have been some cases of dogs and cattle dying or developing long-term health problems because they've ingested BGA.

These toxins will affect humans too if we accidentally consume them after putting our hands in the water or swimming. They can cause skin and stomach problems, as well as more serious illnesses. Children are more at risk than adults.

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Large amounts of BGA can also use up a lot of the oxygen in the water overnight. This can drastically reduce the amount of oxygen available for fish and other aquatic creatures, which sometimes kills them.

What can I do?

Our Coaches are always looking for updates from the Rivers and Canals trust whom advise on any Alge Blossoms, however if you think you've seen BGA in the water, please let one of our coaches know and report it to the Canals & Rivers Trust via the form below

[CRT online contact form](#)

If you see a warning sign about BGA in your area, take it seriously. People and dogs should avoid entering the water altogether. Dog owners can get more information from the Blue Cross.

For all those participating in our activities on the water please ensure you thoroughly wash your hands after coming into contact with the water.