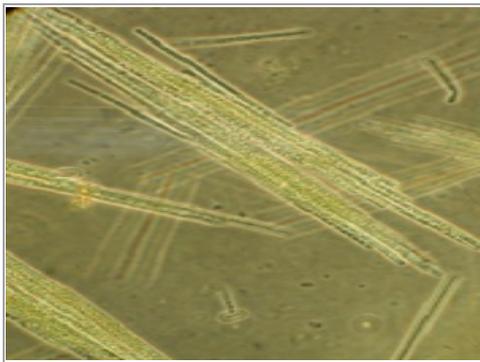


What causes blooms and scums?

Cyanobacteria are important photosynthetic organisms that have lived on the Earth for millions of years. Though often called algae, they are actually more closely related to bacteria. Cyanobacteria are found in all kinds of environments, both in water and on land, and mostly go unnoticed.



Anabaena spp.



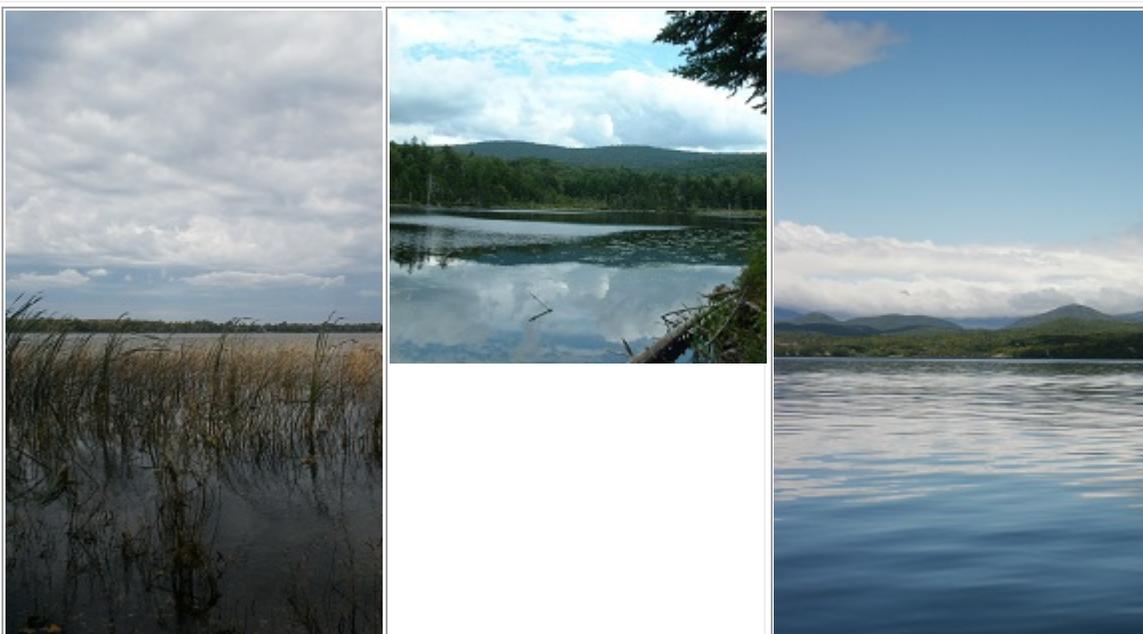
Aphanizomenon spp.

Under certain conditions, cyanobacteria can form blooms (high cell densities) and scums (dense accumulations of algae at the water surface). In Vermont, we are most likely to observe blooms and scums when nutrient concentrations, particularly phosphorus, are high, the water is warmer, and the wind is quiet.

There are exceptions to these general rules – cyanobacteria can bloom under the ice or on lakes with no nutrient concerns – but in Vermont, the most frequent occurrences of cyanobacteria blooms have been on phosphorus-rich lakes in mid to late summer. In most cases, they last only a short time but some lakes do have cyanobacteria blooms that last for weeks.

It is difficult to control a cyanobacteria bloom while it is occurring. Currently, the best approach to limiting the number and intensity of blooms is to reduce the phosphorus found in the water. Millions of dollars are spent in Vermont to improve water quality by reducing the amount of phosphorus in the wastewater and storm water reaching our lakes and rivers.

You can help reduce algae blooms in local waters by reducing nutrient and sediment run-off from your property.



Quick Links

[Short-term control of nuisance algae](#)

Learn how to make your home and property lake-friendly

[LakeWise – technical assistance for lakeshore owners](#)

[Vermont Low Impact Development Guide for Residential and Small Sites](#)