



Tip sheet – How you can tackle algal blooms

There are many things each individual can do to help prevent algal blooms and protect our water quality. Following these tips will save you money and help keep our streams and the Great Lakes blue, not green!

Tips for home or at the cottage:

- What you put down the drain can end up in our waterways and lakes. Switch to phosphorus-free cleaning products (i.e. dishwasher detergents and personal hygiene products).
- What you put on your lawn, garden or sidewalk can all end up in the Great Lakes. Avoid over-using road salt in winter and fertilizers in summer. Only apply when necessary, use non-toxic alternatives whenever possible, and pull weeds by hand.
- Make sure your septic system is checked and cleaned every three to five years.
- Don't put garbage or food waste down the toilet.
- Compost your leaves and food waste to reduce the need for synthetic fertilizer.
- Leave your shoreline natural. Plant appropriate shoreline vegetation to reduce erosion, and absorb nutrients.
- Hold back water with rain gardens, rain barrels, and more permeable surfaces that allow water to slowly infiltrate into the ground instead of washing directly into storm sewers and waterways.
- Don't blow yard waste and grass clippings into streets or storm drains and maintain your stormwater system by making sure the inflow/outflow structures are clear.
- Always pick up after your pet.
- Use a commercial car wash; commercial car washes are required to properly dispose of wastewater and many filter and recycle their water.



Photo credit: Brenda Culler, ODNR Coastal Management

And if you need help identifying the stuff growing on your lake, check out this algae identification field guide published by the Government of Canada -

http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2011/agr/A125-8-2-2011-eng.pdf

To learn more, download *Clean, Not Green: Tackling Algal Blooms in the Great Lakes* from environmentaldefence.ca/algae

And don't forget to spread the word! Share this tip sheet with your friends and family.