



## Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Know it. Avoid it. Report it.

### Know it.

Most algae are harmless and are an important part of the food web. However, some species of algae, like blue-green algae (cyanobacteria), can form blooms on surface waters and produce toxins that can be harmful to people and animals. See images below for HAB examples and common characteristics.

### Avoid it.

Avoid swimming, boating, fishing or other contact with water that looks like it may have a bloom. Never drink, prepare food with, or consume untreated surface water, even if there is no bloom. If you are on a public water supply, your supplier is required to treat, disinfect, and monitor water for consumers.

### Report it.

If you think you see a suspicious bloom, please report it to NYS DEC or NYS DOH. See other side for information on how to report and useful contacts and resources for Skaneateles Watershed Residents.

### Toxic Harmful Algal Blooms - May look like the following:



Bright green or like pea soup.  
Floating green dots or globs.



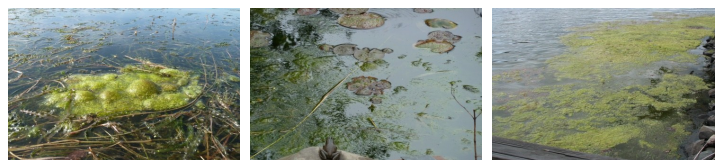
Parallel, usually green, streaks.  
Blooms often along shorelines.

### Non-toxic Green Algal Blooms

Some green algae blooms can look like a HAB, but do not produce toxins. See examples below for what a non-toxic bloom might look like:



Blue, green, or white spilled paint.



Bubbling scum, floating rafts on the water may be entangled with other plant material. May look hairy, stringy, like a tumbleweed in the water, or like wet fabric on rocks, plants or water.

## Reporting HABs

### **NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)**

Submit a Suspicious Algal Bloom Report Form (available on the DEC website). Email DEC at [HABsInfo@dec.ny.gov](mailto:HABsInfo@dec.ny.gov) if you are unable to complete the form.

### **Skaneateles Watershed County Health Departments**

Provide information about bloom-related symptoms to your local health department.

Onondaga - (315) 435-6623

Cayuga - (315) 253-1405

Cortland - (607) 753-5035

## HABs Notifications and Alerts in Skaneateles

### **Onondaga County Health Department**

The City of Syracuse, the Onondaga County Health Department, and the New York State Department of Health are monitoring the public drinking water for the presence of toxins associated with HABs (microcystin). Sample collection begins in July each year, and samples are sent to New York State certified environmental labs for analysis.

The Onondaga Health Department will notify the public when alternative water should be used for drinking, making infant formula, making ice, brushing teeth and preparing food.

The Onondaga County Health Department in consultation with the NYS DOH will issue necessary advisories for drinking water if levels exceed normal limits.

### **NYS Department of Health**

Information regarding health impacts of HAB toxins can be found at [health.ny.gov/harmfulalgae](http://health.ny.gov/harmfulalgae)

### **NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)**

NYHABs map shows the locations of reports of current freshwater HABs in NYS during reporting season.

### **City of Syracuse Water Department**

Regular posting of Skaneateles lake data, microcystin results, water quality reports, watershed rules and regulations available at: [www.skanlakeinfo.org](http://www.skanlakeinfo.org)

Publication updated 2025. Photos and protocols provided by NYS DEC and NYS DOH. For more information on HABs, please visit: [www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov) or [www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov).

*Funding for this publication and CCE Onondaga programming in the Skaneateles Lake Watershed is provided by the City of Syracuse Water Dept. Cornell Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity, affirmative action educator and employer.*