



All plant life have three basic necessities that are required for them to thrive; water, sunlight and nutrients. Controlled growth of algae within an aquarium can be beneficial as it converts the byproduct of fish waste into oxygen through the process of photosynthesis.

The downside is similar to weeds within a garden overgrowth of algae can counteract the benefits as it grows like wildfire throughout your aquarium.

Common reasons for algae overgrowth

These are some prime examples of algae overgrowth within your aquarium;

- Too much light
- If your aquarium is in direct line of sunlight
- Overfeeding the fish resulting in increased fish waste
- Using water with high levels of nutrients

Maintaining a balanced aquarium

Maintaining balanced growth of aquatic plants and microorganisms is important in any aquarium. As stated above there are pros and cons to algae growth within an aquarium. The first thing to bear in mind is how to achieve this goal to maintain the equilibrium - but that is part of the fun of having an aquarium. Here at Seneye we have a few tips that we can provide to you that have worked for us;

- **Regulate lighting** - Both sunlight and artificial light are beneficial but when regulated it can achieve the best amount of algae growth. Placing an aquarium in a room where it will receive the right amount of direct sunlight is tricky but achievable, and it is advised to use artificial lighting due to the unpredictability of the amount of direct sunlight an aquarium could receive in any given day.

When using artificial lighting please ensure that lighting is no stronger than necessary and is not on for longer than eight hours a day. It is ideal to have a timer that will turn the lights on and off each day.

- **Food consumption** - To administer the correct amount of food for your fish is key regardless of algae overgrowth. Too little fish feed is not ideal for the inhabitants whereas overfeeding increases the phosphates in the water. We would suggest to watch your fish feed the first few times for five or so minutes to determine whether all the feed has been eaten. If there is still feed in the aquarium after this time then you are overfeeding. To properly regulate feeding times is key, and it takes time to determine the correct amount for your inhabitants.
- **Water Testing** - Testing your water source is key. It is ideal to keep a balance phosphate and nitrate levels to avoid unnecessary loss of fish life due to ammonia (please find [here](#) and [here](#) for more information). In an established aquarium water testing should be considered essential, and an operating expense associated with keeping an aquarium.

- **Clean = Healthy** - If you notice too much algae growing on your aquarium ornaments and tank it is best to remove it by scraping it off the sides of your aquariums and cleaning it off ornaments when changing the water.
- **Aquatic plants** - Essentially algae is a 'weed' in regards to aquariums growing live plants in your aquarium is added competition for accumulating algae that are both feeding off the nutrients that enter your aquarium. Maintaining live plants will avoid algae overgrowth.
- **Algae-eaters** - A fish that will clean up your aquarium for you? That is food for thought. There are some reputable algae cleaners such as the [Otocinclus](#) and the [Siamese Algae-eaters](#) but it is advised do conduct thorough research on the ideal algae eater for your aquarium before purchasing one.

Types of Algae

There are many different types of algae and to understand them will help you resolve the issue. Here's a list of common algae types with links to provide a more thorough explanation;

- **Brown algae, gravel or silica algae.** It is commonly found in new tanks. It can be cleaned off very easily, and will disappear once your tank matures. It will accumulate in small batches throughout a tank and grow over time. Causes of brown algae are down to high amounts of phosphates and nitrates, inadequate lighting, low oxygen levels or low amounts of nutrients. This can be easily resolved by cleaning the tank as detailed above.
- **Blue-Green algae, Slime or Smear algae.** This accumulation of 'algae', although not algae at all as it is [cyanobacteria](#), is caused by too much phosphate and nitrates in the water. It can spread like wildfire throughout an aquarium and cause considerable amount of damage. Maintaining ideal water levels is key, but if your water contains phosphates in it then ideally a special treatment is required.
- **Red algae or Beard algae.** This type of algae will most likely enter an aquarium through contaminated bags and ornaments or even as free floating strands of a newly purchased fish in a bag or transporter. When CO2 levels in an aquarium are too low then the Beard algae will thrive. It is advised to remove the plant or ornament that is effected by Beard algae and clean it in a diluted solution of bleach (ideally 1:20 ratio of bleach to water) to ensure that all strands of the algae have been removed. Alternatively a Siamese Algae-eater or a [Black Molly](#) for example are ideal for the task.
- **Spot algae, Green algae, or Hair algae.** Typical causes of this type of algae are down to excessive amounts of light and nutrients. It is entirely harmless and is highly unlikely to overgrow. It is common within healthy aquariums which every aquarist will experience at some point. Cleaning the tank and filter is one way to remove this type of Algae from glass and ornaments.
- **Green water, or Algae bloom,** Caused by the growth of microscopic algae in an aquarium. Being the most frustrating of algae to remove it cannot be scraped or wiped from the sides of an aquarium or ornaments, or cleaned out by water changes as the remaining algae will simply grow back, it is best to use a diatomic filter or to completely remove light from your tank. Of course the latter option has its risks.

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