Michigan
Harmful Algal Bloom
Picture Guide

6/24/2020

Cyanobacteria

- Also known as “blue-green algae”
- A normal and important part of many aquatic ecosystems
- Can produce cyanotoxins and other irritants that can be harmful to people and animals
- There are many different species of cyanobacteria, and not all produce cyanotoxins
- A “bloom” occurs when there is a rapid increase in cyanobacteria
  - This may be called a “harmful algal bloom” or “HAB” if the bloom can produce toxins
- Can also produce strong odors

Appearance of Cyanobacteria

- Cyanobacterial blooms can be a variety of colors:
  - Green, blue-green, blue, brown, yellow, white, purple, or red
- They can look like scums in the water and may have small flecks, foams, or sometimes globs and mats floating in it
- The water can also look like it has spilled paint or a green sheen on the surface
- You cannot tell if cyanotoxins are present in a cyanobacterial bloom just by looking at it

Examples of green cyanobacteria

Examples of blue cyanobacteria

Examples of red or purple cyanobacteria

Examples of lake conditions commonly mistaken for cyanobacteria

Filamentous green algae

Duckweed

Aquatic plants

Oil sheens

Insect exuvia (cast-off outer skins)