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ALGAE IN THE AQUARIUM

The problem of uncontrolled algal growth can become a problem in some aquariums. It is important to understand that there is no such thing as "Aquarium Algae", the algae that is growing in the aquarium is found in nature. It is when conditions favour the growth of these algae, it then grows to a level that becomes unsightly and can even damage other lifeforms. This caresheet is directed mainly toward control methods in a freshwater aquarium, but the general principals are the same in saltwater.

Algae is in most cases a plant, and like all other plants requires nutrients and light in order to grow. Light itself **DOES NOT** cause excessive algae growth; what it does do is allow the algae to take advantage of any nutrients that maybe in the water. If we can limit the nutrients available to the algae, it cannot grow no matter how much light it receives. Having said this though, a sensible lighting period for most aquariums is no more than 8 – 10 hours a day. Try also to shade the aquarium from direct sunlight.

Nutrients that cause most problems are nitrate, phosphate and silicates. Solid organic wastes can also cause algae to grow if it is allowed to build up.

POSSIBLE NUTRIENT SOURCES:

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| Tap Water | - Nitrate Phosphate & Silicates |
| Food | - Especially excessive use of frozen or "fresh" foods. |
| Water Additives | - Some plant "Fertilizers" actually contain phosphates & nitrates. A good plant supplement should contain only major & minor trace elements. |
| Fish Waste | - Too Many fish. |
| Nutrient release from Solid wastes in dirty undergravel or canister filters. | |

SOLUTIONS:

Regular water changes will dilute nutrients from the aquarium and allow you to remove solid wastes from the filter systems so that these compounds do not end up contributing to the problem. (see the Reef And River Caresheet "Water changes, How, When, Why & How Much?")

Top up evaporation losses from the aquarium with Distilled or R.O. Purified Water (Marine Aquariums in particular).R.O. water is available from the store.

Test any water additives for undesirable compounds.

Introduce herbivores such as snails or fish which will eat the undesirable algae.

Clean mechanical filters regularly.

Reduce the fish load in the tank if appropriate.

Plant with fast growing bunch plants as they will compete with the algae for the available nutrients.

Use specific chemical filtration materials such as Seachem's Phosguard, Hagen's Green X or Aquarium Pharmaceuticals' Nitra Zorb, as these will rid the water of a proportion of nutrients.

As a last resort, the use of algaecides such as Simazine based products can be helpful, but we feel that it is always best to try natural methods of control before resorting to chemical means. Chemical controls are really only "covering up" the problem at the end of the day.

For specific advice on your problem algae, please speak to one of the staff in store.