



# The Mini Page

**Next Week:**  
Peppermint  
and hot  
chocolate

Issue 48, 2022

Founded by Betty Debnam

## Awesome Algae



photo by Ed Bierman

Have you ever eaten algae? You probably have, although you might not have known it. Just what are algae, anyway?

The Mini Page talked with a scientist from the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, to learn more about algae and their importance to Earth.

### What are algae?

An **alga** (AL-guh) is a plantlike organism. Most live in groups, so we usually use the plural, **algae** (AL-jee). Algae are simple organisms.

Sometimes larger algae look like plants, but they don't have specialized parts, like the kelp pictured below, which doesn't have any actual leaves or roots.

There are thousands of different types. Algae can be single cells so small that

hundreds could fit on the period at the end of this sentence. Or they can be large, many-celled organisms. **Phytoplankton** (FIE-toe-PLANK-tun) are a type of algae that live in bodies of water. They are usually made of only one cell.



photo by Dr. Robert Ricker, NOAA/NOS/ORR

### Mini Fact:

There are more than 400,000 known types of algae.

### Habitat

Most algae live where it is very moist, in the sea or in bodies of fresh water. They also live in soil and snow. One type of algae lives by using the morning dew in the desert.

### Feasting on sunlight

Like plants, most algae use sunlight to turn carbon dioxide gas and water into food. When organisms create their food out of light, it is called **photosynthesis** (foe-toe-SIN-theh-sis). Algae and plants take in carbon dioxide and give off oxygen.

Luckily for people and animals, oxygen is the waste product of photosynthesis. We couldn't live without the oxygen produced by algae.

Algae are often categorized by their colors, which are usually shades of green, red or brown. Different colors have different ways of using photosynthesis. Experts believe each color probably developed, or evolved, from a different organism.

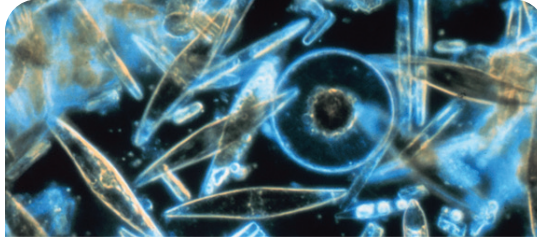


photo by Prof. Gordon T. Taylor, Brook University, courtesy NOAA

One beautiful type of algae is a diatom (DIE-uh-tahm). Diatom cell walls are made of glass. The tiny one-celled organisms come in many shapes. These live between crystals of sea ice in Antarctica.

### Creating air

Algae have been on Earth for more than 1.6 billion years. Early algae existed when there was hardly any oxygen in the air.

Over time, they produced so much oxygen waste that it changed the atmosphere. They put enough oxygen into the air that animals and people could breathe. Without algae, none of us would be here.

Plants also produce oxygen. But algae were producing oxygen more than a billion years before plants even existed.

The algae in the ocean are responsible for more than half of all the oxygen we breathe today. Some experts believe they may have produced as much as 85% of the oxygen in our atmosphere.



photo courtesy of NURC/UNCW and NOAA/FGBNMS

This green leafy alga lives in the Gulf of Mexico.

## Resources



### On the Web:

- [bit.ly/MPalgae](http://bit.ly/MPalgae)

### At the library:

- "Seaweed: Marine Algae From the Northeast Coast" by J. Roach-Evans

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## Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of algae are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



- ALGAE, CARBON, CELL, COLOR, DESERT, DIATOM, FOOD, GAS, HABITAT, KELP, ORGANISMS, OCEAN, OXYGEN, PHYTOPLANKTON, SEA, SIMPLE, SNOW, SOIL, WATER.

I	R	Y	H	O	C	E	A	N	D	B	I	A	T	C
Y	O	R	G	A	N	I	S	M	S	I	L	Z	Z	Z
Z	V	Z	G	S	D	H	T	Y	H	G	A	K	N	N
M	U	O	A	A	I	O	Y	J	A	R	E	T	A	W
A	O	X	Y	G	E	N	O	E	X	L	S	R	O	G
D	E	S	E	R	T	J	R	F	P	I	O	O	V	M
H	A	B	I	T	A	T	L	J	M	L	S	O	I	L
Q	N	O	T	K	N	A	L	P	O	T	Y	H	P	I
R	A	D	W	O	N	S	L	C	J	S	E	A	O	E
C	E	L	L	Y	M	E	B	O	N	O	B	R	A	C

## Cook's Corner

### Green Beans With Tarragon

#### You'll need:

- 2 cups fresh green beans, trimmed
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped red bell pepper
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon tarragon
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon pepper



\* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

#### What to do:

1. Boil green beans and salt in 1/2 cup water in a saucepan until crisp-tender, about 5 minutes.
2. Run green beans under cold water to stop the cooking process. Drain.
3. Meanwhile, combine remaining vegetables in separate pan with olive oil.
4. Sprinkle spices on top and cook on medium heat until tender, about 5 minutes.
5. Add vegetable mixture to green beans and stir to combine. Serves 4.

## 7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

1. gift (7) \_\_\_\_\_
2. not raw (6) \_\_\_\_\_
3. pig sound (4) \_\_\_\_\_
4. plastic toy bricks (5) \_\_\_\_\_
5. what you smell with (4) \_\_\_\_\_
6. 10-cent coin (4) \_\_\_\_\_
7. head of a school (9) \_\_\_\_\_

ED	DI	PRIN	NO
CI	COOK	SE	ME
PRE	NT	PAL	GOS
LE	OI	SE	NK

Answers: present, cooked, oink, Legos, nose, dime, principal.

## Mini Jokes



- Amy:** What kind of math are fish best at?
- Arnie:** Algae-bra!

## Eco Note



Antarctic researchers captured awesome images of pink skies over the frozen landscape brought on by Tonga's record volcanic eruption in mid-January. The Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano spewed an enormous number of fine particles high into the stratosphere, resulting in vivid sunsets in parts of Australia and New Zealand. The effect in the near-perpetual winter twilight of Antarctica's Scott Base and McMurdo Station has created a fiery hue over the ice, even at noon.

adapted with permission from Earthweek.

## For later:

Look in your newspaper for articles about bodies of water.

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