



SEA DWELLERS AND FRIENDS

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What is Greenwater?

Greenwater is a microscopic suspended (or free-floating) algae. This phenomenon occurs when conditions are just right. It will occur if there is the right amount of nutrients like: phosphates, nitrates, and light. It is usually not harmful to the fish. The aquarium will appear green and murky. Many times you cannot see the back of the aquarium. Algae eaters do not eat it.

Since these algae feed off of nutrients in the water, the absolute worst thing that you can do is change the water. This reduces the amount of algae in the aquarium, but it also replenishes the food supply. The aquarium will remain clear for a short period of time after a water change. The algae will soon return as a result of the increased food supply.

Eventually the algae will burn itself out. This means that it will exhaust all available nutrients and die. This could take weeks to occur. Most people do not want to look at a green aquarium for this long.

Here are some recommended courses of action:

- 1. Treat your tank with a product called Microbe Lift Algaway 5.4 or Aquarium Pharmaceuticals Algaefix. These products are usually very effective. They are also safe to use with plants. It They are not safe to use with invertebrates. Follow the directions on the package and remember to remove your activated carbon (not all the filter media-just the carbon.)**
- 2. Reduce or eliminate light- Algae needs light to grow. If you reduce the photoperiod, you reduce the growth rate of the algae. Eliminate all natural sunlight. Totally eliminating all light for 4 days or longer will eliminate the algae. The algae needs light to survive. It can store enough food for 3 days. Use common sense and do not create a fire hazard when covering your aquarium.**
- 3. Non- Iodized salt- Non-iodized salt is sometimes effective against Greenwater. Salt is often used as a disease preventative. Dissolve 1 level teaspoon per gallon of water.**
- 4. An ultraviolet sterilizer- Water is circulated through a chamber and exposed to intense ultraviolet light. This is a 99.9% effective treatment. The disadvantage to this method is that it is expensive. They usually cost between \$150 and \$200.**

- 5. A diatom or micron filter-** This is a filter that uses a cartridge similar to the ones used in pools and spas. The cartridge filters out the algae. This is an 85% effective treatment. These filters usually sell for a little over \$50.
- 6. Other Algaecides-** These are chemicals that kill algae. You add the chemical to the aquarium and the algae dies. Do not use this method if your aquarium has live plants. Algae are a plant. If it kills algae it kills plants. Many algaecides also kill snails, clams, and crabs, so read the label. This method works maybe 45% of the time. Some common ones to use are: Algae-a-way, No More Algae, Velvet Guard, Algae Destroyer, and Pond Blocks. Be certain that you remove the activated carbon from your filters (not the entire cartridge, just the carbon). Activated carbon will remove algaecides.
- 7. Freshwater Clams-** Freshwater clams filter feed. This means that they feed on particles that are suspended in the water. This treatment is fairly effective, but very impractical. It would take many clams to eliminate the algae. The clams would starve after the algae are gone.
- 8. Reverse Osmosis Water-** Reverse Osmosis (or RO) water is water that has had all of the impurities have been filtered out. Replacing a large portion of you aquarium water with RO water eliminates the algae's food. This is the only instance where a water change may be helpful. RO water is not the same as spring water or distilled water. A beneficial side effect of RO water is that it has a neutral PH. This is a great way to maintain a low PH. Use caution, you must acclimate your fish to this water.
- 9. Temperature-** Sometimes a gradual increase or a gradual decrease in temperature will make conditions unfavorable for greenwater to live. The important word is gradual. Sudden changes in temperature will make fish sick.
- 10. Live Plants-** Adding live plants to an aquarium is a natural means of controlling greenwater. This method requires patience. The plants will compete with the greenwater for nutrients. Eventually the nutrients will be depleted from the water and the greenwater will starve.

These are only suggestions on ridding your aquarium of greenwater. The only one that always works is an ultraviolet sterilizer. Please let us know if you discover any other methods that are effective against this menace.