

# Algae Control: Herbivores Can Help

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Aggressive algae growth is a symptom of underlying water quality issues. Algae become a problem in aquariums with poor water quality, poor water circulation, or excess nutrients. An aquarium algae problem can ruin your aquarium's aesthetic appeal, but more importantly, it can compromise the health of certain aquarium inhabitants.

## NON-CHEMICAL APPROACH TO ALGAE MANAGEMENT

Rather than reach for chemical methods of management, we encourage you to pursue less aggressive means of management. Start by maintaining excellent water quality through routine [water changes](#), regular [maintenance](#), and maintaining [low phosphate](#) levels. You can also mechanically remove some algae with [algae scrapers](#) and plant [pruning tools](#). The most effective way to control algae, however, is a multifaceted approach that incorporates herbivores that rely on algae as a natural food source. Since no single algae-eating species is capable of devouring all types of algae, it is good practice to include multiple species for your aquarium. Keep in mind that attempts at controlling algae are often unsuccessful if the root causes are not identified and properly addressed.

## ALGAE-EATING FRESHWATER HERBIVORES

Consider the following herbivorous fish and invertebrates for your freshwater community aquarium. These beneficial and ornamental additions can help manage algae and perform other tank cleaning tasks such as eating detritus and excess food or keeping aquarium glass free of film. Be sure to research compatibility on [LiveAquaria](#).com before adding any new fish or invertebrates.

**SNAILS** Will eat most algae attached to aquarium glass, plants or decorations.

**OTOCINCLUS CATFISH** Eat most green algae, plus green spot algae and brown algae.

**SIAMESE ALGAE EATERS** Eat spot algae, brush algae, and are one of the few fish that eat black beard algae.

**AMANO SHRIMP** Eat algae, detritus, and excess food.

**BLACK MOLLIES** Great for most types of green algae and will eat algae off of plants.

**PLECOSTOMUS** An aquarium favorite for algae removal. Some species are more efficient algae eaters so research feeding habits first.

## ALGAE-EATING MARINE HERBIVORES

These easy-care, hardy specimens are ideal for marine systems. Though they help immensely with algae problems, these beneficial invertebrates are only effective if your marine aquarium is invertebrate-friendly and free of copper-based medications.

**SNAILS** Will eat the green film on the aquarium glass as well as various microalgae. [Cerith](#) and [Abalone snails](#) will eat diatoms. [Turbo snails](#) will eat filamentous (hair) algae.

**CRABS** [Hermit crabs](#) will eat hair algae, cyanobacteria, and other types of algae. [Emerald crabs](#) will eat bubble algae.

**COURT JESTER GOBIES & BLACK SAILFIN BLENNIES** These peaceful inhabitants will aggressively eat filamentous algae.

**LETTUCE NUDIBRANCH** An unusual herbivore that helps control nuisance bubble algae.

Remember, adding algae-eating specimens is not a replacement for maintaining good water quality, it is just an added boost to your overall management plan.

**Question:**

When is the best time to introduce algae-eating invertebrates to my aquarium?

**Answer:**

The best time to add algae-eating invertebrates is right after setup. This helps prevent algae from getting a foothold before your aquarium is fully established. Algae-eating invertebrates also help establish the biological filtration in new setups.