

## **Blackouts – A Free Algae Killer**

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There is nothing more enjoyable than looking at a well-maintained, beautifully aquascaped planted tank. Conversely, and ironically, there is nothing more frustrating for the hobbyist than dealing with "new tank syndrome" and the onset of what feels like outbreak after outbreak of algae until the tank finally stabilizes itself.

Algae doesn't discriminate. It hits neophyte and expert alike. It can manifest itself in low-light, lightly planted tanks, or in "high tech tanks" with pressurized carbon dioxide and custom lighting enclosures. The simple truth is the environment we as hobbyist try to maintain for our plants is also an ideal environment for algae.

There are many commercially available solutions for algae. These range from medications you can treat the water with, additives for your filter, UV sterilizers and diatom filters just to name a few.

Medicate a tank against blue-green algae (which is part bacteria, part algae) and you run the risk of introducing med-resistant strains the next time. Diatom filters and UV sterilizers can put a big hole in your wallet. Even buying algae eating fish means less room in your tank for the fish you want to keep, and more money feeding those algae eaters after the outbreak is over.

Why not naturally remove the algae without spending a dime. Blackouts are 100% effective, and cost you NOTHING! Additionally, there are no side effects to your fauna or your pocketbook by employing a blackout.

The reason blackouts work on removing algae is rather simple. Algae are, for the most part, a very simple organism. For example, green water is single-celled. The plants you have intentionally introduced into the tank are far more complex botanically speaking. Healthy plants will always out-compete algae for resources in a tank. Healthy plants can also withstand adverse conditions better than algae. This is true of blackouts. Plants can survive short periods of no light by using up stored nutrients. Algae cannot.

### **Blackout procedures**

- 1) Feed fish. Healthy fish can survive a full week without food. This will be their last meal until the blackout is over.
- 2) Do a large water change. 50% is advisable. Since you will not be able to monitor water chemistry at all during the blackout, you want to ensure you have fresh water before you begin.
- 3) Completely blackout the tank. Absolutely NO light should be able to penetrate into the tank. Use corrugated cardboard, heavy blankets, etc...
- 4) Do nothing for 5 days. Do not feed fish. Do not take off covers "just to make sure".
- 5) After 5 full days, remove cover and perform another large water change (required because of dead and decaying algae) and tank maintenance.
- 6) Find the root cause for your algae problem in the first place. A blackout is not the solution to your algae problem. Finding the nutrient imbalance and correcting it is.