

Factsheet 3: Seaweed

What is seaweed?



- Seaweeds are marine algae. 'Algae' is the Latin word for 'water plants'.
- They grow on rocks, stones, shells, on water animals, and on wood (wharves, bridges, shipwrecks etc.) Some grow on other seaweeds.
- They are unlike land plants as they have no roots. They have 'grippers' called 'holdfasts' The only job the holdfast has is to keep the seaweed firmly attached to the rocks etc.
- Seaweeds can only stand upright when supported by water.
- Seaweeds get their nourishment from seawater.
- Some seaweeds grow in deep water, some in shallow water and some between high and low tides.
- There are hundreds of different kinds of seaweed growing in salt water.
- There are 3 main groups of seaweed: **green** algae, **brown** algae and **red** algae

Seaweed is an important part of coastal and ocean ecosystem, providing food and habitat for a variety of species. Even when seaweed washes ashore, it continues to serve important purposes—providing a place where sand collects to help build beaches and dunes, nutrients for coastal ecosystems, and areas where birds and other animals forage and find shelter. Accumulations of seaweed on beaches, however, can cause challenges, particularly in warmer weather when the material decays and causes odour problems. Plans are occasionally put in place to effectively address seaweed accumulations on recreational beaches while still protecting coastal resources. Cornwall is home to a wide variety of seaweed, which includes algae such as kelp, various wracks and sea lettuce.

What do marine algae look like?

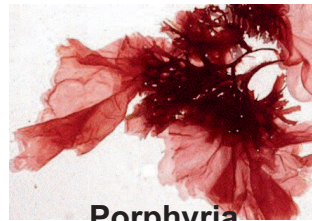
- Seaweeds come in many different sizes. Some need a microscope to see them, some are as tall as trees.
- They can look like heavy ropes, whips, threads, fronds, leaves, hands, feathers.
- Some have dense branches, branches that fork, some have few branches
- Some seaweeds are long and flat

Common Examples

Laminaria



Bladder Wrack



Porphyria

Sea Lettuce

Ulva lactuca,
lactuca being Latin
for "lettuce"



Seaweed Management?

During storms and other wind/weather events can result in a large amount of seaweed material being washed up on the beach. These accumulations, referred to as blooms, may become a nuisance during periods of warm weather when the seaweed begins to decay and produce odours and/or attract flies and their larvae. Excessive seaweed accumulations may also reduce beach access for recreational activities.

Because seaweed is a natural and important part of the coastal ecosystem, it should be left in place whenever possible. When seaweed management is deemed necessary, however, local conditions and management considerations must be fully understood and addressed before selecting appropriate techniques. Because there is no one-size-fits-all approach for all beaches, some areas recommend developing a seaweed management plan .

How Are Seaweeds Useful?

- Seaweeds can be found in some ice cream and other dairy products, sweets, puddings, biscuits and cakes. Welsh people make Laver-Bread, the Japanese use it in 'Sushi'
- It is used in some toothpaste, body lotions, some shoe polish
- Seaweeds are becoming more popular in foods such as salads, soups, fried mixed vegetables, in juices, some can be crushed, dried and toasted.
- Seaweeds are high fibre, contain minerals, iodine and magnesium, all of which are required in a healthy diet. They contain twice the amount of nutrients found in land-grown vegetables and can be farmed without the use of fertilisers, pesticides and without using fresh water.