

Reading Selection

Duckweed, Elodea, and Algae: Why Are They Important?

Why should you add duckweed, elodea, and algae to your aquarium? Each is special in its own way. Water plants, like elodea and duckweed, are beautiful to look at. Algae and water plants help keep a healthy exchange of gas in the water. They also provide food and shelter for many animals. What other reasons can you think of for adding these organisms to your aquarium?

Not Just Beautiful to Look At

Aquatic organisms such as duckweed, elodea, and algae add a special kind of beauty to our world. Some have bright colors and unusual shapes. Others sway with the gentle motion of the water's current.

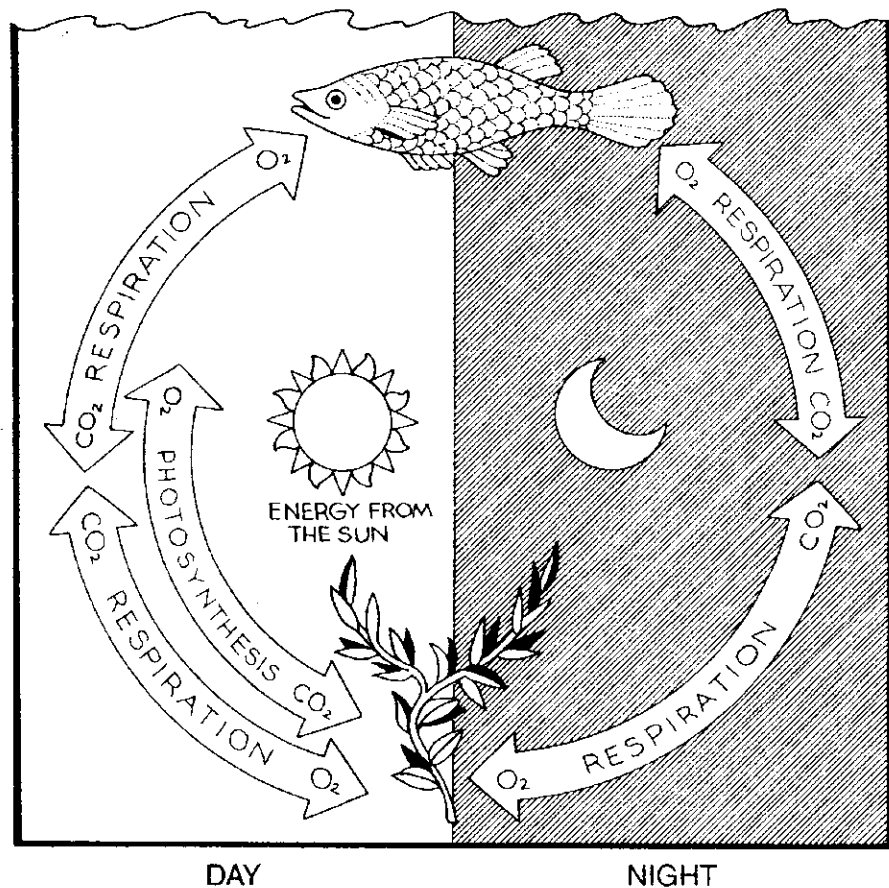
These producers are especially important in a pond or slow-moving stream. This is because they help provide oxygen for animals in the water. How? By taking in one gas (carbon dioxide, or CO²) and giving off another (oxygen or O²).

Some aquatic organisms provide homes and protection for tinier organisms and baby animals. These creatures nestle in the leaves and stems of underwater plants where they can live safely.

Why Swap Gases?

Animals, plants, and other living things, such as algae and bacteria, are always using

oxygen. This is called **respiration**. Respiration helps organisms get energy. In the daylight, organisms that have chlorophyll, such as plants, algae, and some bacteria, can use the sun's energy, water, and carbon dioxide to make their own food. We call this **photosynthesis**. Through photosynthesis, these organisms release much more oxygen than they take in. In the water, animals such as fish, snails, and tadpoles use the oxygen to breathe.



Oxygen-carbon dioxide cycle