

Vivobarefoot Will Launch an Amphibious Shoe Made With Algae-Based Foam This Summer

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By [Derek Markham](#)

The company that makes “shoes for people who don’t want to wear them” is introducing a new model of adventure shoe constructed with EVA foam made from algae biomass.

As far as modern materials go, plastic in all its myriad forms has got to be one of the most widely used (and overused) technologies in the world. It’s enabled a massive revolution in manufacturing and design, with applications ranging from clothing to aerospace, and springboarded a huge number of other innovations, and yet it’s also created a ginormous boondoggle of plastic pollution all across the globe. Finding better plant-based materials, and designing more biodegradable and sustainable options, is becoming more essential every day, not only in terms of outright “disposables” (single use) and packaging, but also for the end products, many of which are staple items, such as shoes.

Last fall, I wrote an article about a startup called Bloom, which is [harvesting algae from waterways](#) and using it to create a high performance flexible foam. This serves at least three purposes, in that algae biomass is harvested from freshwater locations “at high risk of algal

bloom,” which helps maintain the ecological health of the waterway, the water is essentially “cleaned” of excess nutrients and returned to the source, and the harvested biomass is then used to offset some of the product’s EVA base material.



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[Bloom's](#) algae-based foam will soon be used by the shoe company Vivobarefoot to make an amphibious shoe for summer adventures, with the Ultra III having a 25% algae foam content. Although the figure of 25% algae doesn't seem that large, and leaves me wondering when the 100% algae foam will be ready for prime time, according to the company the current ratio still can have a big impact on waterways.

“Every pair will help re-circulate 57 gallons of filtered water back into natural habitats, and prevent the equivalent of 40 balloons full of CO₂ being released into the Earth's atmosphere.” – Vivobarefoot

I've never gotten the appeal of these Croc-style (pardon the expression) shoes, but I do see a lot of them on people these days, so if the amount of petro-plastic material in them can be reduced, then that's a good thing. And if Vivobarefoot, which has made a name for itself in the barefoot and minimalist walking and running footwear scene, is adopting algae-based foam as an option, then perhaps we'll see wider adoption in its other shoes and from other companies as well, and maybe even more freshwater algae mitigation operations supplying the raw materials.

The [Vivobarefoot Ultra III](#) will go on sale in July of 2017, and will be priced around \$75.
