



TREES AND PLANTS

RED MANGROVE

ABOUT

The Red Mangrove (*Rhizophora Mangle*) of Florida is a short, bushy tree that grows to about 20 feet high, unlike its tropical equivalent, which can reach 80 feet. They are equipped with distinctive, tangled reddish roots growing above the ground known as “prop roots”, which give the impression of the trees walking on water. Red Mangroves flower in the spring, producing pale yellow flowers. Oval leaves grow opposite each other on the stem, 3-5 inches (7.62-12.7cm) long and 1-2 inches (2.54-5.08cm) wide. Growing in brackish (somewhat salty) water along creeks, bays and lagoons, the trees thrive in the salty environment because they can extract fresh water from the saltwater. Some mangrove species expel excess salt through their leaves and others block the salt entering the roots. The Red Mangrove has a remarkable way of propagating (reproducing), producing a rusty-brown cone-shaped berry. The seeds sprout in the tree, sending down initial roots 6-12 inches (15.24-30.48cm) long, and on dropping either stay in the soft bottom around the “mother” tree’s base or are transported in the water to other suitable locations.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mangroves are a true native species of Florida. It is estimated that 75% of the game fish and 90% of commercially caught fish in south Florida depend on Mangroves. Mangrove forests protect and stabilize coastal lands and, like wetlands and estuaries, are vital to the survival of many creatures. They function as nursery, feeding, and breeding grounds for a large number of fish, shellfish, birds and other wildlife. Human activity, such as waterfront development, badly affects mangrove forests. Any kind of removal or destruction of these mangrove habitats is extremely dangerous to the balance of nature throughout Florida’s coastal areas. The impact of human activity regarding mangroves in Florida has already caused extensive erosion of soil and a decrease in the food chain for the wildlife they support and for commercial fishing. The importance of the contribution of the estimated 469,000 acres of mangroves to the health of Florida’s wetlands and coast cannot be overstated.

For more detailed information visit: www.dep.state.fl.us or www.globio.org or www.sfrc.ufl.edu

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Why are Mangroves so important?

- a) They convert saltwater to fresh water.
- b) They are a healthy food source.
- c) They provide wildlife habitat and protect the coast.
- d) The wood is used for housing.

Answer is C.

