



THE MANGROVE MARSH

Mangrove marshes are important habitats in the Indian River Lagoon. They supply food for the animals. Mangroves are homes to many animals. Mangroves clean the water. Mangroves keep the shore from washing away.

Mangrove trees cannot survive cold weather. They only grow where it does not freeze. In areas where cold temperatures are common, salt grasses replace mangroves.

Mangroves are trees that once lived inland. They changed to live in the brackish water and high stress along the coast. Mangroves have special roots, leaves, and “seeds”. They need to be special to survive.

Mangroves do not have true seeds. Seeds are dormant stages in development. Mangroves do not have a dormant stage. Mangrove “seeds” start to germinate, or grow, while they are still on the tree. For this reason they are called propagules not seeds.

There are three types of mangrove trees in Florida; the red mangrove, the black mangrove and the white mangrove.

The Red Mangrove

The red mangrove is the most common mangrove along the Indian River Lagoon. It is easy to identify by its roots. Roots drop down out of the branches. They are called prop roots. They help hold the tree up in the soft mud. The red mangrove is called the walking tree. The prop roots make the tree look like it is walking on water. Red mangroves remove the salt from the water with their roots. The propagules are green and shaped like a pencil. The propagules plant themselves as they fall off the tree. The roots have many plants and animals that live on them.



The Black Mangrove

The black mangroves grow behind the red mangroves. Black mangroves get their name from their black trunk. You can also identify black mangroves by their roots. Lots of finger-like roots or pneumatophores stick out of the mud around their trunks. The tree breathes with these roots. If the roots stay under water too long, the tree drowns. Black mangrove leaves are dark green on top and silver on bottom. They remove salt with their leaves. You can see salt on the top of the leaves on hot days. The propagules of black mangroves look a little like large lima beans.



The White Mangrove

White mangroves grow the farthest from the water. They cannot live in the water. They have no special roots. You identify the white mangrove by its leaves. The leaves have special parts. The leaves are light green ovals. On the leaf stem are two bumps. These bumps are salt glands. The salt glands pump out the salt taken in by the roots. The propagules of the white mangrove are small and tear drop shaped with wrinkles

