

Factsheet: Mangrove Forests

Key Facts

Mangroves are amazing trees that have managed to adapt to growing in the inhospitable tidal zone between the land and the sea.

Mangroves are recognised by their pencil-like breathing roots that arise from the tree's radially spreading roots.

There are several species of mangroves but the white mangrove (*Avicennia marina*) is the most widespread. These smooth-barked trees have clusters of small fragrant orange flowers.

Mangrove forests are affected by the rising and falling of the ocean's tides. The aerial roots and tap roots can filter out the salt in the brackish water they grow in. Support roots grow directly into the mud to anchor the tree. Other roots snake up and down with the upward loops rising above the salt water level.



Mangrove trees reproduce using specialized seeds. These seeds actually start growing while still attached to the parent tree so that they can root themselves quickly when dispersed into water.

- > Mangrove trees are found all over the world in tropical and subtropical climates. They are found in tidal zones, swamps and shorelines.
- > Mangrove trees store excess salt in leaves that later fall off.
- > There are about 39.3 million acres of mangrove forests in the warm coastlines of tropical oceans all over the world
- > Today mangrove forests are one of the most threatened habitats in the world.
- > Mangrove roots are very

susceptible to pollutants like crude oil clogging their lenticels, and continual flooding from artificial dikes and sea walls.

- > Mangroves act as sinks which concentrate pollutants like sewage, toxic minerals and pesticides and herbicides.
- > Resort development, artificial dikes, and the shrimp aquaculture industry all pose huge threats to the existence of mangroves.
- > Mangrove forests stabilize the coastline, reducing erosion from storm surges, currents, waves,

and tides. The intricate root system of mangroves also makes these forests attractive to fishes and other organisms seeking food and shelter from predators.

- > Mangroves improve water quality by filtering sediments and absorbing excess nitrates and phosphates, thereby preventing contamination of near shore waters.
- > Mangroves also lessen the impacts of climate change by sequestering carbon in their leaves and storing gas in their sediment.