

BLACK MANGROVE

Avicennia germinans

Take time to appreciate Mangroves--guardians of our shores, quietly and modestly providing for an orderly flow of life between land and sea. An integral part of both our marine and terrestrial environments, they not only are protectors of our shores from storms but also cradle the nursery of our seas.

In North America, there are only three species of mangroves: Red, Black, and White. They are “usually” found in this order: Red nearest the water, moving inland Black is next, then White on the highest ground.

Although one might tend to think that mangroves are from the same family, they are not. Three factors make each a mangrove: 1) they can tolerate wet feet; 2) they can handle saltwater; and 3) they are viviparous, meaning they produce living offspring—seeds germinate on the tree. You may tell the trees apart by looking for differences in leaves, bark, flowers, fruit, and sometimes location.

Here we have the native Black Mangrove:

- The opposite leaves have a smooth upper side that is medium green, with veins that create slight ridges. The underside is silvery-green and fuzzy.
- They excrete salt through their pores.
- The bark is dark and leathery-looking much like alligator or elephant hide.
- The Black Mangrove has pneumatophores (think breathing tubes) that grow upward from the lateral roots and extend above the highest tide which helps the tree exchange gases.
- They may be drowned if pneumatophores are flooded and underwater for an extended period.
- The small cluster of white flowers usually blooms in the summer, followed by fruit.
- The propagule looks like a lima bean.
- This tree is an important coastal soil stabilizer and promotes the deposition of sediments.
- The black mangrove is host to the Mangrove Buck-eye butterfly.

