

WHITE MANGROVE

Laguncularia racemose

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 White Mangrove:

- White Mangrove is an evergreen tree growing up to 80 feet tall and having a trunk diameter of 30 inches. The bark of the tree is striated (marked by parallel ridges).
- Leaves are opposite and usually thick and rounded (spoon-shaped), many with an indentation at the tip. Each leaf has two small nectaries (small nodules) found on the petiole just below the leaf base.
- Nectaries excrete a sweet substance that may play a role in pollination and/or attract certain ants that will attack destructive insects.
- It is the most versatile of the three mangroves, as it can both block and/or excrete salt.
- It has a cluster of small white flowers.
- The propagules are about the size and shape of an almond.
- The shed leaves contribute to the fertility and function of the adjacent marine ecosystem.

