



RED MANGROVE

(*Rhizophora mangle*)

There are about 40 species of mangroves in the world. Four species grow in Jamaica: white mangrove (*Laguncularia racemosa*), black mangrove (*Avicennia germinans*), button mangrove (*Conocarpus erectus*) and red mangrove (*Rhizophora mangle*).

The red mangrove is a native of tropical America, the Pacific islands, the west coast of tropical Africa. The plant grows in brackish water and grows to a height of 15 m. It grows into small and large spreading trees. The little shiny, dark green, leathery leaves are 5-7 cm long. The flowers are small and yellow or white.

Aerial roots grow down from their branches and trunks and go deep into the mud. These roots support the branches which are above the water. The roots trap the silt (mud deposits) and these deposits pile up in the water especially at the mouths of streams. This helps to build up the land. These plants have underground roots as well, which absorb nutrients from the mud and water.

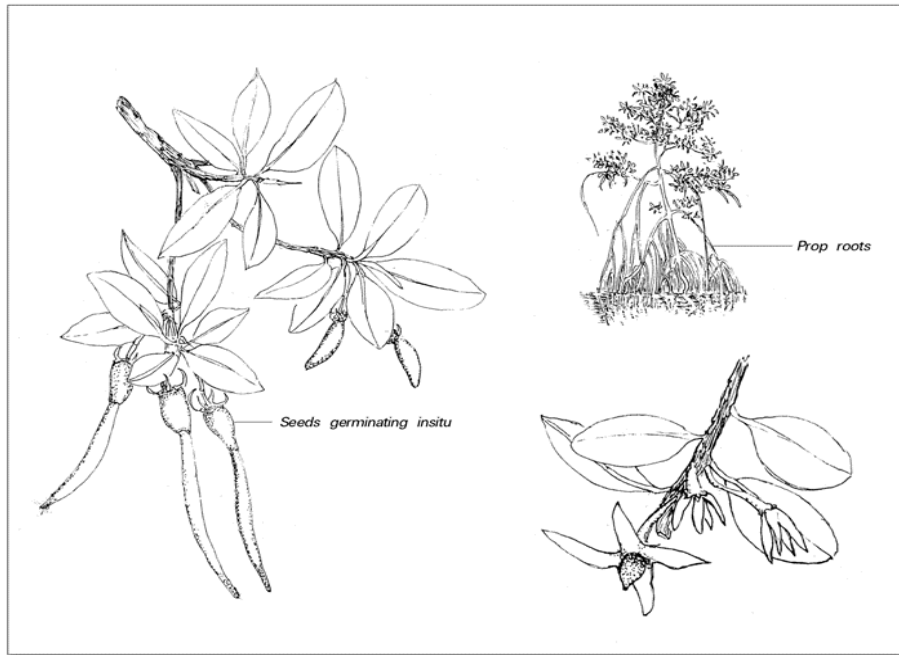
The fruit is brown and measures 2.5 cm long. Mangrove seeds often germinate while the fruit is still on the tree. The seed sends down a long, heavy root which holds up the young plant when the fruit falls in mud. If the fruit falls in water it will float until its root strikes mud and then it continues to grow.

Mangroves protect the coastal areas where they grow from the full force of storm waves, and they filter pollutants which are washed down from the land. Many animals including crabs, young fish, and oysters live in mangrove swamps. Destruction of our mangrove swamps is harmful to fishing since these swamps are nurseries for young animals. They are also feeding and nesting grounds for many sea birds.

The wood makes excellent firewood and charcoal and can be harvested carefully without killing the plant. Tannins used in the leather industry can be extracted from mangroves.

RED MANGROVE (*Rhizophora mangle*)

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| Family: Rizophoraceae | Species: <i>Rhizophora mangle</i> | Author: Linneaus |
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| Height: 15m | Habitat: Shallow coast & brackish rivers | Persistence: Evergreen |
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