

Coral

DID YOU KNOW?

Corals have inbuilt sunscreen to stop them from getting burnt!

At AQWA

In AQWA's Far North Region you can explore one of the world's most remote areas, home to dangerous marine animals and colourful coral lagoons.

What's in a name?

Coral comes from a word meaning red. It was first used to describe the red coral of the Mediterranean.

Animals-not plants!

Corals are a colony of tiny animals, called polyps. Polyps look like an upside-down jellyfish, with a cup shaped body and tentacles around the rim. Like a jellyfish, their tentacles contain stinging cells that help them to catch food.

Reef builders

Coral reefs are formed by the most common type of coral; hard coral. Hard corals use sea water to create a limestone skeleton. As the colony grows so too does the skeleton, and the coral reef.

Indoor plants

Hard corals get the energy to build coral reefs from tiny plants that live inside them. These plants, called zooxanthellae, use sunlight to make nearly all of the polyps' food. With their food prepared for them, hard corals have enough energy to build the reef.

Split or spawn?

Coral polyps can reproduce in two ways; by dividing in two or by a process called 'spawning'. Every year, about a week after the full moon in March, millions of sperm and eggs are released into the water at the same time. New polyps are formed which then settle on the reef to build new coral colonies.

On the softer side

Not all corals are hard corals. Soft corals lack the hard limestone skeleton of the hard corals and are instead supported by calcium rods called sclerites. Just like hard corals, they form colonies and feed using tiny tentacles. Soft corals generally have eight tentacles, whereas hard corals have six.