

**MANGROVES**

Mangroves are a wide variety of plant species that are found in salty estuarine mudflats. They live where most species of plants can't survive and are found in silty and salty soils that have low oxygen content. For air uptake, mangroves protrude special aerial root branches called "Pneumatophores" which are found sticking up out of the mudflats during low tide.

- Mangroves are mainly found in the tropics with some 40 different species found there. However they can be found as far south as Southern Victoria (White Mangrove).
- Mangroves have small yellow flowers and leathery leaves and play an important part in Pacific Islanders culture, providing food, medicines and timber for building and firewood.
- In the past, very little was understood about the complex ecosystem of the mangrove and most have been cleared for farming and timber.

However, Mangrove forests provide breeding grounds and habitats for fish, (which accounts for a major part of Islander's diet). Other species of animals include birds (such as egrets and sea-eagles), mammals such as the "Flying Fox" "mudskippers", crustaceans and crocodiles (in Australia).

It has also been discovered that clearing mangroves has lead to increased cyclone damage because mangroves provide a shelter break against wind and soil stabilisation reducing the potentially devastating effect of cyclones upon coastal areas.