

SEAGRASS

AN ESSENTIAL ECOSYSTEM




Seagrass forms the basis of a highly productive marine food chain. Detritus, formed by the breakdown of seagrass, supports innumerable small marine animals, whilst nutrients released during the decomposition of seagrass supports the growth of marine flora.

Seagrass also supports epiphytes (tiny plants which grow on seagrass leaves), which also contribute to this complex food chain.

Seagrass meadows are an essential nursery ground for many fish species and crustaceans, including, prawns, barramundi, whiting & mullet. Vulnerable juvenile animals find food among the seagrass and seek shelter among the foliage which not only protects them from predators, but also from wave and current action.



Dugongs and Green Turtles rely on seagrass as their primary food source.



A number of fish and crustaceans nurtured within the seagrass meadows are economically valuable species. Seagrass plays a crucial role in the commercial and recreational fishing industries.

By reducing the effect of waves and swells, seagrass stabilizes coastal sediments, reduces erosion and enhances water clarity. It also filters nutrients from coastal run-off.

As seagrass is sensitive to changes in water quality, it is an excellent indicator of coastal health. Learning about seagrass can help us to make environmentally responsible decisions.



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