

The Helpful Hand of the Seagrass

Every year our school goes to Crandon Park on World Water Day to pick up trash and explore the beach. This is super important to the environment because trash is a problem in our oceans and affects our wildlife drastically. I feel very grateful that I get the chance to help fix this problem. During these events, I always notice these beautiful graceful seagrass plants. They remind me of helping out animals and that always gives me a great feeling. That is the reason I picked the seagrass plant to be the American icon.

The seagrass can be a shrub or a tree. It can grow up to 35 to 50 feet in height and 20 to 30 feet across. The scientific name is *Coccoloba uvifera*. It belongs to the polygonaceae family. You can find it in a coastal community. It is native to central and South Florida which is in the Southeastern region. The seagrass has big circular shaped leaves that have orange and yellow veins throughout. It has very thick branches and is very leafy with some patches. The fruit can be green until they ripen in the fall and become a fuchsia color. The flowers are cream-colored, and the stem is green; they bloom in long clusters. They usually bloom from spring to early summer but can occur year-round.

Erosion is destruction done by water, wind, and ice. The water can rip parts of land away and take it into the ocean making it very tough to grow vegetation. As a result, the problem can slowly become a huge issue when ignored and not addressed. Seagrass can help with this issue. It stabilizes the sand and prevents erosion; it can even withstand hurricane winds. One day as I was watching the news, I came across a news story about how a family had to move from their house in the beach because the water kept eating up at the land. Erosion can cause many problems and because of that I think we should be planting many more seagrass plants along the coastal shorelines.

Every day animals are losing their homes to human development. One of the benefits of planting Seagrass is that it provides shelter and food for animals like sea turtles. The fruit it produces is also eaten by native birds and mammals. In addition, the circular leaves of the plant also serve as a protective canopy for different animals like lizards, songbirds, tortoises, and even beach mice. Not only does Seagrass look beautiful but it's also a plant with many environmental benefits.

Overall, the seagrass is very beneficial for the environment and its fruit has many health benefits as well. Seagrass helps with erosion and provides animals with food and shelter. It plays a really important role by stabilizing sand and preventing erosion. It's also a truly beautiful and meaningful plant, one that reminds me of the ocean and of wonderful feelings.

Bibliography

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