

Things to know about the reef:

- Coral polyps grow in the warm seas surrounding Jamaica. They seem like rocks or plants, but are actually tiny animals with a skeleton of limestone. Many polyps grow together into coral colonies or coral heads and, over time, they build our coral reefs.
- Corals provide habitats and homes for fish and shellfish. Branching corals provide tangled thickets that are important for baby fish, keeping them safe from larger fish or from washing away in storms.
- Golden branching corals used to be the main corals on Jamaican reefs, forming large thicketed meadows. The reefs looked golden and the seas were very productive with the abundant nursery habitat.
- Most of the corals died in the 1980s due to pollution and overfishing thus preventing a balanced and healthy system.
- Today our reefs look green-brown and are far less productive, so fish are small and costly in the market. Beach loss in places like Hellshire and Negril is another result of losing these corals.
- Communities around Jamaica such as Oracabessa in St. Mary and Bluefields in Westmoreland are protecting their fish and re-growing corals to improve local catches.



The Round Hill Reef Gardens

*Bringing corals and coral-related
fisheries back to Hanover*



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Round Hill is working with local marine scientists to restore the corals, fish and shellfish to our house-reef.

Part of this process is the “gardening” of corals, by growing them in a nursery and then planting those grown corals back to the reef. These corals, in turn, provide good nursery habitats for baby fish, lobsters and crabs to grow, increasing total numbers. As the area fills up with fish, any extras move outside of the reef garden area to be caught by local fishermen for sale at our Hanover beaches and markets.



Branching coral thicket fish nursery habitat being restored by the Oracabessa Bay Fisherman's Cooperative.



Branching corals in a nursery in Montego Bay



Other coral species of the reef and reef garden.

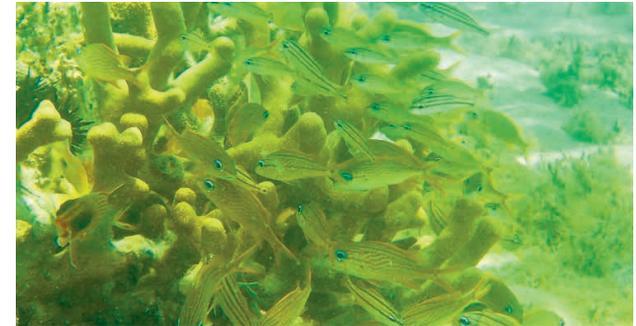
These extra fish are larger, having lived their early lives in a vibrant and productive restored coral reef with clean, healthy conditions and plenty of natural food.

To keep the corals healthy, technicians (local fishermen) will be employed and trained to tend them. They will remove the snails and worms that eat the coral, and remove algae and plastic trash that smother the coral. The technicians are called “Coral Gardeners” as their work is similar to what you might do in your home garden.

To help the Coral Gardeners, a few large and mature fish need to be present to eat the algae, sponges, worms and snails that also kill the corals. As such, Round Hill and the Coral Gardeners will set a line of buoy markers around the reef garden area and ask fishermen to not fish within the garden. Fishing won't be allowed at all in this area, except for lionfish.

The Coral Gardeners will play an important role in communicating this request to fishermen and the community, as will Round Hill's staff, because this project is for the betterment of all of our nearby communities.

Round Hill looks to provide educational tours to guests as well as to area schoolchildren by snorkeling and glass-bottom boat tours. The Coral Gardeners will be guides for these activities.



Round Hill Coral Gardens