

Grow your own coral

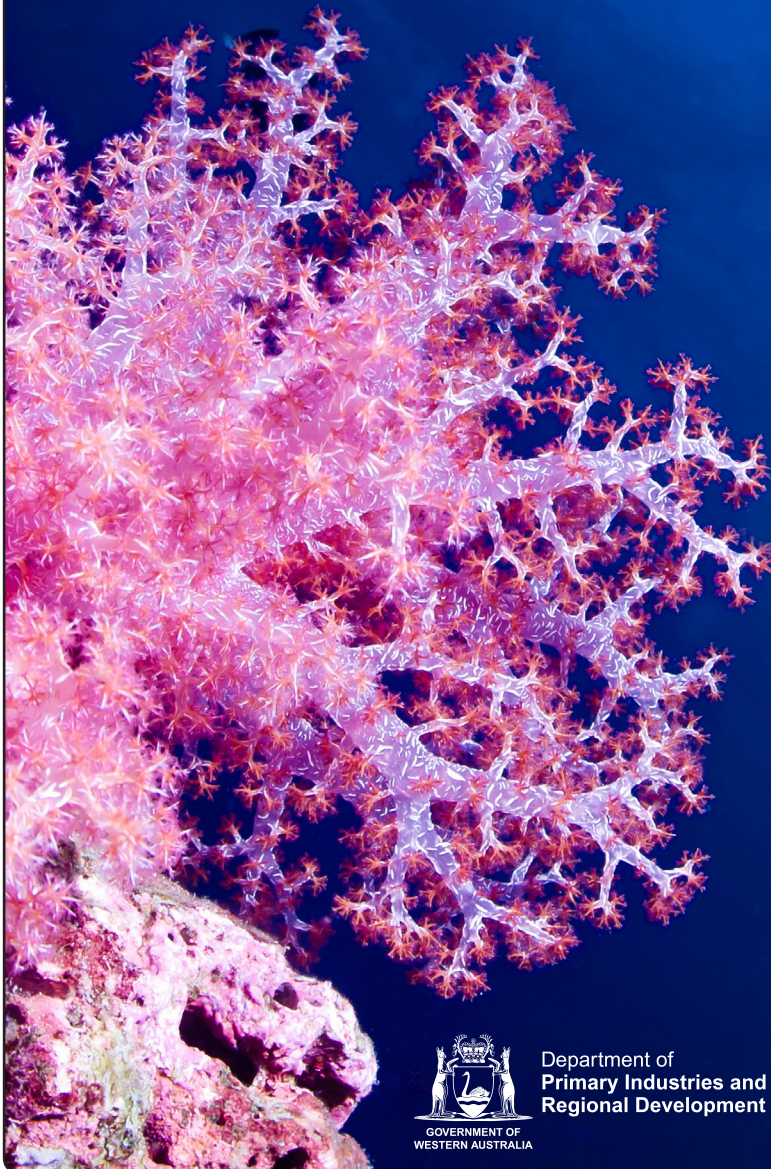
Make your own coral-like formations using household items and ingredients.

You'll need:

- a plastic bowl
- base material – choose from charcoal, porous brick, tile, cement or sponge in piece sizes around 2-3cm
- water
- table salt (iodised or plain)
- liquid bluing (you'll find this amongst the laundry bleaches in the supermarket)
- food colouring
- measuring tablespoons
- an empty jar

Instructions:

1. Put your pieces of charcoal, brick, tile, sponge or cement into your bowl in a layer, this is the substrate.
2. Sprinkle water onto the substrate until it has been thoroughly dampened. Pour off any excess water.
3. In an empty jar, mix 2 tablespoons (45 ml) salt, 2 tablespoons (45 ml) bluing. Stir until the salt is dissolved.
4. Pour the mixture over the prepared substrate. Leave the bowl with the substrate uncovered in a well ventilated place overnight.
5. The next day (day 2) sprinkle 2 more tablespoons of salt over the substrate.
6. By the 3rd day a crystal formation should start to appear.
7. On the 3rd day, prepare a mixture of water, salt and bluing (2 tablespoons or 30 ml each) and pour in to the bottom of the bowl, being careful not to disturb the delicate growing crystals.
8. Add a few drops of food colouring to each piece of your base material.
9. Set the 'coral' in an area where it will not be disturbed.
10. Keep "feeding" your base material with more bluing, salt and water from time to time.
11. Your crystal formation has developed in a similar way to corals. It has used the water, bluing and salt to form, just as coral polyps use dissolved calcium carbonate to create the stony cup that protects their soft bodies and creates reefs.



Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development

More resources like this are available at
<http://marinewaters.fish.wa.gov.au>