

Adopting The Sargasso Sea

Once in a while, when the wind blows from the East and the currents are just right, Bermuda's beaches load up with seaweed. We tend to think of this as a nuisance – that seaweed can be unsightly, smelly and can seem to spoil the look of a beautiful beach. But the seaweed we see is just a tiny part of the huge floating garden that makes up the vast Sargasso Sea: mile after mile of open-ocean, draped with a tangle of golden plants and teeming with exotic life.



Sargasso Seaweed is unique on our planet – a true ocean plant that grows without any attachment to the ground. Drifting in a lazy whirlpool around our backyard ocean, these algae form an oasis in our ocean desert. Yes, the waters around Bermuda are almost empty of the nutrients needed to sustain life – the lack of tiny plants in the water is the reason our ocean is so clear. But the giant alga Sargassum creates its own ecosystem, and becomes an oasis home for numerous other plants and animals.

So specialized and unique are the creatures of the Sargasso Sea, that scientists and naturalists around the world hope to turn our backyard into the world's first "High Seas Marine Protected Area". This would mean protection from overfishing and pollution, so all of the creatures that live, eat and breed in the Sargasso would have a safe haven. Bermuda would be in the middle of a huge marine reserve!



Adapting to Life in the Sargasso

If you live your life floating in the rough water at the surface of an ocean, you need some pretty clever tricks to survive. Get tossed out of your seaweed home by a wave and you might get eaten. If you are seen from above, birds will try and eat you. Visible from below and big fish will try to bite you. The only place to hide is in the seaweed. See how these creatures hang on, blend in and survive:

First, find the Sargasso creatures in the pictures. Then, see if you can match them with their special adaptation?



Sargassum Fish - fins have become hands to grip the seaweed

Sargasso Pipefish - long and thin like a stype of the algae (a long strand or leaf)

Sargassum Shrimp - coloration exactly like the seaweed, expert camouflage

Sargasso swimming Crab - paddles on back legs

Sargasso Nudibranch - color and frills match

Sargassum perfectly

