

South Florida scientists grow corals from scratch

WPTV News (09/04/09) Scientists and students at the National Coral Reef Institute are growing coral in a lab at Nova Southeastern, in hopes of transplanting them right onto our reefs.

DANIA BEACH, FL--Coral reefs are very important to South Florida. With the number of struggles they have to survive, one South Florida university is doing its part to help them grow and thrive.

Scientists and students at the National Coral Reef Institute are growing coral in a lab at Nova Southeastern, in hopes of transplanting them right onto our reefs.

"We collect a bunch of eggs and sperm and essentially mix it together in a five gallon bucket on the boat and bring it back here and take the eggs out of the bucket and look at them for fertilization and then distribute them over tanks and hopefully they settle after that," explains student research assistant Adam St. Gelais.



The larvae settle on limestone plates and grow in a closed room for about a week, then move outside to grow for a few years.

Another method of producing coral is by taking little pieces of the coral and gluing them on a plate, similar to rooting plant clippings.

"So by just taking a few fragments in the wild and putting them in the system you can produce many more corals that you can use for restoration and transplantation," says Nova research scientist Alison Moulding, PhD.

South Florida's coral reefs generate billions of dollars in revenue each year, and help sustain the natural balance of the ecosystem.

"The message I'm trying to get across is really conservation and preservation are what is important, however restoration is one tool we can use to help restore reefs. It's not the ultimate answer to all the problems the reefs face but it one thing we can do to try and help restore reefs," Moulding says.