

# Invasive Orange Cup Coral Silently Grows Off The Keys

The orange cup coral (*Tubastraea coccinea*) is a non-native species that has invaded the waters off the Florida Keys. This coral is native to the Indo-Pacific region and was likely introduced to the Keys through the aquarium trade. The orange cup coral is a threat to native corals because it can outcompete them for space and resources.

The orange cup coral is a fast-growing coral that can form large colonies. It is typically found in shallow water, between 10 and 30 feet deep. The coral is orange or red in color and has a cup-shaped appearance. The cups are about 1 inch in diameter and are arranged in rows. The orange cup coral is a hermaphroditic species, meaning that it has both male and female reproductive organs. It reproduces by releasing eggs and sperm into the water column.



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by Tim Grollmund

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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The orange cup coral is a voracious predator that feeds on a variety of invertebrates, including sponges, tunicates, and bryozoans. The coral uses its tentacles to capture prey. The tentacles are covered in nematocysts, which are stinging cells that paralyze the prey. Once the prey is paralyzed, the coral ingests it whole.

The orange cup coral is a threat to native corals because it can outcompete them for space and resources. The coral is a fast-growing species that can form large colonies. It can also tolerate a wide range of environmental conditions. This makes it a difficult species to control.

The orange cup coral was first discovered in the Keys in 2002. Since then, it has spread rapidly throughout the region. The coral is now found in all of the major coral reef areas in the Keys. It is also found in other parts of Florida, including the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean.

The orange cup coral is a serious threat to the coral reefs of the Florida Keys. The coral is a fast-growing species that can outcompete native corals for space and resources. It is also a voracious predator that feeds on a variety of invertebrates. This makes it a difficult species to control.

### **What can be done to stop the spread of the orange cup coral?**

There are a number of things that can be done to stop the spread of the orange cup coral. These include:

- Educating the public about the dangers of the orange cup coral
- Encouraging boaters and divers to clean their boats and gear before and after entering the water

- Restoring damaged coral reefs to create a more resilient ecosystem
- Conducting research to find new ways to control the orange cup coral

The orange cup coral is a serious threat to the coral reefs of the Florida Keys. However, there are a number of things that can be done to stop the spread of this invasive species. By working together, we can protect the coral reefs of the Keys for future generations.

### **Additional information**

- The orange cup coral is also known as the fire coral or the finger coral.
- The orange cup coral is a member of the family Dendrophylliidae.
- The orange cup coral is native to the Indo-Pacific region.
- The orange cup coral was first discovered in the Keys in 2002.
- The orange cup coral is now found in all of the major coral reef areas in the Keys.
- The orange cup coral is a threat to native corals because it can outcompete them for space and resources.
- The orange cup coral is a voracious predator that feeds on a variety of invertebrates.
- There are a number of things that can be done to stop the spread of the orange cup coral.

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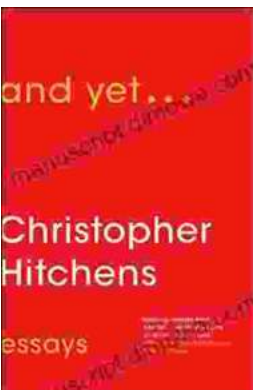


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