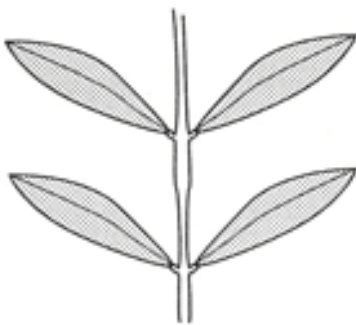


Mangrove Leaves

Leaves vary between species with mangroves having leaves that are
 (a) Simple and Opposite
 (b) Simple and Alternate
 (c) Compound

Simple and Opposite



Leaves in pairs, one each side of the stem

Simple and Alternate

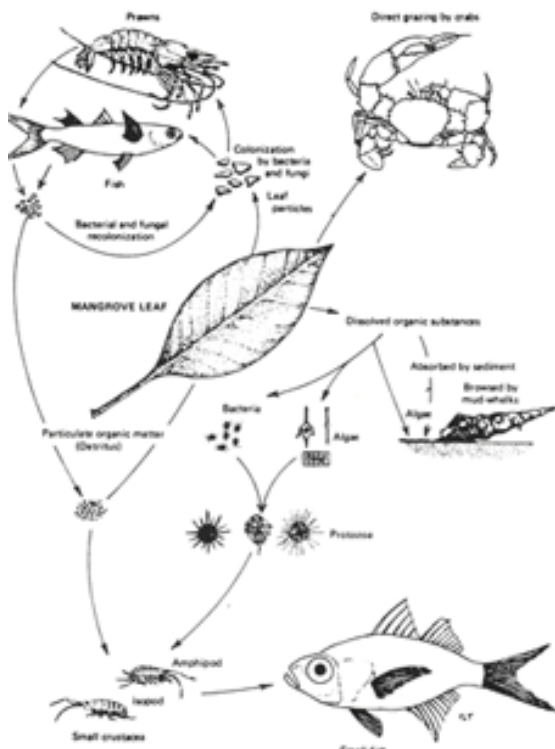


Arrayed one by one along a stem – not opposite

Compound



A leaf divided to the mid-rib into smaller distinct leaflets



The production of leaf matter is a major contributor of energy and organic matter to the mangrove ecosystem. Some whole leaves are eaten by herbivores (e.g. insects & crabs). Generally mangrove leaves are broken down by bacteria and fungi after which they become available to food chains of marine animals. Small fish such as mullet eat partially decomposed leaf particles. Molluscs and small crustaceans consume small sized decomposed material (Detritus). Overseas studies have shown that in some coastal waters 80% of fish caught commercially were linked to food chains dependent ultimately on mangroves.