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Chapter 19

Environmentally tough coral species as candidates for aquarium culture

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Abstract
The Arabian Gulf is a relatively small body of water connected to the Indian Ocean via the narrow Straits of Hormuz. Kuwait lies on the north – western shore of the Arabian gulf at a latitude of 29º N placing it over 500 km north of the typical coral reef zone.
There is a clear gradient of species diversity for both corals and fish from the mouth of the Gulf where the diversity is highest, to its northern reaches with the lowest diversity. A total of 35 scleractinian coral species, from 12 families, have been recorded in Kuwait waters and of these 27 species are hermatypic (reef building) and eight species are ahermatypic (non reef building) corals.
In Kuwait the water temperatures can reach 35 ºC in summer and drop to 11.5 ºC in winter. The salinity of the Kuwait waters varies from 38 ppt to 42.4 ppt. These two major extreme factors combine with other minor factors (turbidity, sedimentation, natural hydrocarbon presence) to limit coral diversity in Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf waters.
However, the corals that do thrive in this area are some of the most environmentally tolerant in the world. This makes them of special scientific interest, and some of them are ideal candidates for culture in aquarium environments.