

BOCA RATON

THE NEWS

FOR LEASERS IN LOCAL NEWS

Monday

► OCEAN ENVIRONMENT

Gumbo Limbo reef balls offer marine h

Molded concrete resembles coral reef

By Amy Galt
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They're 4 feet high, 6 feet around, have lots of honeycomb-like nooks and crannies perfect for tiny sea critters to live in, and they could very well save tons of coral reef off the Florida coast.

They're reef balls, and they're just arrived at the Gumbo Limbo Environmental Center in Boca Raton.

Workers from the Atlanta-based company that developed the artificial reef structures and donated the balls, began setting them up in Gumbo Limbo's outdoor tanks on Sunday. They expect to have the first one completed by Tuesday.

Milda Sinaoualis, the marine conservationist at Gumbo Limbo who is overseeing the reef-ball project, said they'll provide natural habitats for the sea turtles, fish,

mollusks and crustaceans that now live in the center's tanks.

"It's great for the turtles, because they sleep under the rock in the wild," she said. "Plus, in our educational programs, it will bring up the issue of artificial reefs and the state of our natural reefs."

The balls, which were unveiled at a trade show in August, are made by pouring concrete into a fiberglass mold lined with inflatable rubber.

The concrete hardens, the balls and mold are removed, and an artificial reef that closely resembles the real thing is produced.

At a test site in West Palm Beach, where a reef ball was built three months ago, natural coral and algae already have started to grow; and snook, snapper, grouper and sugar fish have moved in, said Todd Barber, president of Reef Ball Development Group Ltd.

Says

The balls will help restore Florida

"It's a great thing for Florida's artificial