

Tampa Bay, Florida Coral Collection

Over a hundred Tampa Bay corals are found in the Gillespie collection. These agatized corals contain a variety of colors and a myriad of shapes, many of which are amazingly beautiful. The coral collection includes freshwater corals, dendritic corals, and fossilized colony corals.

Tampa Bay is famous for its fossil coral. "As far back as 1842 the local residents were picking up the multi-hued chalcedonized fossils and were peddling them to tourists..."¹ Most of Tampa Bay's coral is collected at what is known as *Ballas Point*, which largely consists of private homes. The two main types of coral are fingers and heads. Heads are easier to spot and form rounded masses which appear as modern day brain coral. Fingers are formed from branches of coral and often have a "bluntly-pointed tip and a flat broken base"¹ Finger corals are the most common found in the Tampa Bay area. Coral is found in "pockets" and tends to be very dull with a gritty outer shell upon first finding it. "The true beauty of the coral lies underneath the chalky, gritty overcoat. When sawed in half lengthwise, it is found to be a geode with walls of incredibly colored agate and translucent chalcedony".¹

Links:

Agatized Coral

<http://paleoenterprises.com/coral.htm>

Blue Agatized Coral from Tampa Bay Area

<http://www.paleodirect.net/pgset2/cor-052.htm>

The State Stone: Agatized Coral

<http://www.flheritage.com/facts/symbols/symbol.cfm?page=2&id=16>

Tampa Bay Coral Facts:

- Florida's State Stone is Agatized Coral²
- "Agatized coral comes in a variety of colors, typically gray, brown, black, yellow, white, and on rare occasion red."²
- Tampa Bay Coral is getting harder and harder to obtain.¹
- "Agatized Coral is found in three main Florida locations: Tampa Bay, the Econfina River, and the Withlacoochee/Suwannee river beds."³

¹ Wollin, Jay C. "Dig That Coral". *Gems & Minerals*. December 1970. p. 24-30.

² Paleo Direct Fossils. <<http://www.paleodirect.net/pgset2/cor-052.htm>>.

³ "Florida State Symbols". My Florida.com. 2007.

<<http://www.flheritage.com/facts/symbols/symbol.cfm?page=2&id=16>>.