Using Natural Sea Water in Reef Aquariums

Aquarium · https://shirleyaquatics.co.uk/knowledge/using-natural-sea-water-in-reef-aquariums/

Should I use Natural Sea Water (NSW) in my reef aquarium?

The question of whether to use Natural Sea Water (NSW) or artificial Seawater (ASW) has been around for some time, but there doesn't seem to be a lot of information available on the subject. This may be because until recently, NSW has only been available to those lucky enough to live by the coast in relatively unpolluted areas.

Artificial seawater, on the other hand, can be produced easily using synthetic salt and purified freshwater. Shirley Aquatics has been selling NSW since their move to the new store in 2017 (with a gap in 2018 due to an overhaul of the storage tanks).

You can easily find opinions on NSW, which generally fall into two categories, those that have used it and have seen dramatic improvements in coral reefs and fish alike or you have people who aren't sure about using it and worried about pollution.

How does NSW get to Shirley Aquatics in the midlands, do they go down to the beach with a pump and a hose?

Firstly, NSW is used by London Zoo and all the Sea life centres including the one in the heart of Birmingham. It is also used by the shellfish industry (lobsters, crabs etc) which is worth £266 million per year (and we think our hobby is expensive!).

NSW in the U.K. is collected 3 miles off the South Coast near Dorset. It is taken from the sea bed and as most pollutants tend to float, it is deemed to be the safest place to harvest NSW. If there were any concerns over pollution or microbial content, it would not be used by these giant companies.

Once collected, NSW is pumped onto a tanker lorry and transported around the country. When it gets to Shirley Aquatics all 28,000 litres (along with a “there’s a lot more where that came from mate” joke from the driver) are pumped into underground storage tanks. The water is then either sold or used in the display fish tanks.

How is it Stored?

Unlike ASW, natural seawater can be stored for months. Aquarium connections in London have performed many hundreds of ICP tests (A Laboratory-grade test that analyse the content of 35 different elements in seawater) on NSW and found no degradation or change over time.

The Triton method

Without going into too much detail at this stage, the triton method was developed by and for people who don’t like doing water changes. Reef aquariums run on the triton method can go years without water changes, and so in developing this method, they wanted to put the best water in from day one. They recommend the use of NSW when employing the triton method.

What do we think?

We have nothing but praise for NSW, as soon as we started using it in 2017 our corals perked up. One customer who used it for the first time said it was as if he had poured a fine malt whisky into the tank, the corals looked fantastic (clearly whisky doesn’t do corals any good, but I think he was an “appreciator” of the finer things in life!).

There are even studies to suggest the use of NSW reduces algae blooms, bacterial blooms and even parasite outbreaks. The only downside that we can see is if it is not available in your area. If you are still unsure about using NSW, there is one big clue in its title that should help you make up your mind, “Natural”.

If you’re interested in adding natural seawater to your aquarium, **get in touch** with Shirley Aquatics today.