BEST PLACES TO FIND SEASHELLS

THE GULF AND THE ATLANTIC

Captiva, Sanibel, and Marco Island on Florida's Gulf Coast are three of the best-known locations for shell hunting. But beaches all along the Gulf, as well as the Atlantic, are treasure troves, too.

Design and art by Hiram Henriquez / H2H Graphics & Design Inc.
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SOURCES: Special thanks to Jody Diehl (beachtreasuresandtreasurebeaches.com); *Encylopaedia Britannica*; Pam Rambo (ilovesheling.com); University of Victoria, Canada; José H. Leal, Ph.D., Science Director & Curator, Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum, Sanibel, Fla., *www.shellmuseum.org*; *Eyewitness Books Shells*; Susquehanna University (Pa.); *Florida's Fabulous Seashells: And Other Seashore Life*; *eNature.com*; *The Dorling Kindersley Science Encyclopedia*; *The Encyclopedia of Aquatic Life*

SPIRAL GROWTH OF SEASHELLS

As a mollusk grows, its shell does, too. The mantle secretes crystals of calcium carbonate onto a framework of protein, called conchiolin, creating the hard shell that will protect it.

1 Juvenile shell

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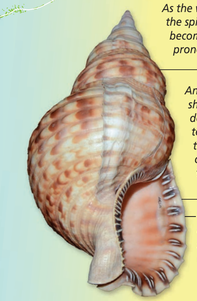

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ATLANTIC TRITON TRUMPET: A species of predatory sea snail, and member of the Ranellidae family of gastropod mollusks.

- **Found:** In shallow water, around rocks and coral reefs. Hard to find.
- **Length:** Up to 14.76 inches.

TOP SPOTS FOR SHELLING

on The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel

Our beaches are home to the best shelling in the world. Plan a trip, and you can make memories one shell at a time.

1. **CAYO COSTA**
   Nine miles of undeveloped beaches and 24,000 acres of nature accessible only by boat.
2. **TURNER BEACH**
   Just past the bridge to Captiva Island, look on the sand bars during low tide for seashell treasures.
3. **BLIND PASS BEACH**
   Every shell in the Gulf seems to wash up at Blind Pass, on Sanibel's north end.
4. **BOWMAN'S BEACH**
   A popular public beach with sand and shells that stretch as far as the eye can see.
5. **LOVERS KEY STATE PARK**
   A remote and romantic beach that's full of wildlife and wonder. Plan a day trip for the full experience.

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SCORECARD

Scan the shoreline and sand bars at the Florida beaches you visit and mark on the boxes of the shells that you find. Although the collection of sea shells is generally allowed statewide, if the shell contains a living organism, leave it where you found it. Some areas of Florida have collecting laws and penalties for their violation. To be certain, check signs or ask local officials.


Eastern Auger ☐


Broad-ribbed Carditid ☐


Banded Tulip ☐


Florida Cone ☐


Bubble Shell ☐


Fighting Conch ☐


Calico Scallop ☐


Kitten Paw ☐


Lightning Whelk ☐


Southern Quahog ☐


Lion Paw ☐


Sunray Venus Clam ☐


Shark Eye ☐


Triton's Trumpet ☐


Ponderous Ark ☐


Atlantic Giant Cockle ☐


Stiff Pen Shell ☐

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Islandology is our way of life. It's knowing sand dollars, giant whelks and more than 400 kinds of seashells roll onto our shores. To some, it's about the thrill of the hunt. To us, it's a memory to hold on to.

Plan your trip at FortMyers-Sanibel.com

VISITFLORIDA.COM

VISUAL GUIDE TO COLLECTING SEASHELLS *on Florida's beaches*

What You May Find

Collecting the shells of mollusks — which come in a rich variety of colors, shapes and designs — is a popular hobby in many parts of the world. Florida's beaches offer an abundance of different species.

LIGHTNING WHELK: Only Florida shell whose spirals regularly go to the left.
- **Found:** In sand, from near low tide to water 10 feet deep.
- **Length:** 2.5 to 16 inches.

Photo by Jody Diehl

SHARK EYE: Predatory sea snails; there are between 260 and 300 species of shark eye worldwide in a wide variety of sizes.
- **Found:** Washed up on shore.
- **Length:** Up to 3/4 of an inch.

PONDEROUS ARK: Covered with black fuzzy coating.
- **Found:** From just below the low-tide line to 60 feet of water.
- **Length:** 1.5 to 2.75 inches.

Photo by Pam Rambo

Photo by Jody Diehl

BUBBLE: Snails are simultaneous hermaphrodites, meaning functional reproductive organs of both sexes occur in the same individual.
- **Found:** Certain species are particularly common in the shallow-water seagrass meadows of the tropics.
- **Length:** 1.5 to 2.75 inches.

BROAD-RIBBED CARDITID: Many halves found on beaches; complete shells often found in bays.
- **Found:** Scattered on shore.
- **Length:** Up to 1 inch.

BANDED TULIP: Most aggressive of all Florida shells; will extend its foot and wave it to free itself.
- **Found:** Common in shallow grassy bays; hard to find along the beach.
- **Length:** Up to 3 inches.

Photo by Jody Diehl

Photo by Jody Diehl

LION PAW: Strong ribs help create the likeness of a paw.
- **Found:** Deeper water, difficult to find along beach.
- **Length:** Up to 6 inches.

Photo by Pam Rambo

EASTERN AUGER: Comes in colors from off white and yellow tan to reddish brown and blueish gray.
- **Found:** Lives in sounds and offshore on shallow sand flats.
- **Length:** 1.5 to 2 inches.

KITTEN PAW: Much like a Lion Paw only smaller.
- **Found:** Usually attached to another shell or rock, but found in abundance (unattached) on Florida's Gulf shores.
- **Length:** Less than 1 inch.

Photo by Pam Rambo

FLORIDA FIGHTING CONCH: A living mollusk may be aggressive when picked up.
- **Found:** In 5 to 25 feet of water and in sandy areas near marine grasses in shallow water.
- **Length:** 2.75 to 4.25 inches.

Photo by Jody Diehl

STIFF PEN SHELL: Live near shore; tend to wash ashore after storms.
- **Found:** In sandy mud and in water 2 to 20 feet deep.
- **Length:** 6 to 12 inches.

Photo by Pam Rambo

CALICO SCALLOP: Mostly found in white and pink, but you might find a few with colors.
- **Found:** In large quantities washed ashore.
- **Length:** Up to 2 inches.

Photo by Jody Diehl

ATLANTIC GIANT COCKLE: Also known as Heart Clams because of their shape when viewed from the side.
- **Found:** Common on shore.
- **Length:** Largest of Florida's cockles at up to 5 inches.

SOUTHERN QUAHOG: Native Americans in Florida used them as both a source of food and as currency.
- **Found:** In sand or mud from low-tide line to 50 feet of water.
- **Length:** Up to 6 inches.

SUNRAY VENUS CLAM: A favorite food of humans.
- **Found:** In sand exposed at low tide; very common on Sanibel Island.
- **Length:** Up to 5 inches.

Photo by José H. Leal

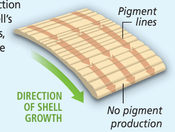
FLORIDA CONE: Varies in color and form.
- **Found:** In ankle-deep water on the shoreline.
- **Length:** Up to 1.5 inches.

Shell Patterns

The complex patterns found on all shells are attributed to the rate at which pigments are produced as a shell grows. Here are three common examples of line patterns:

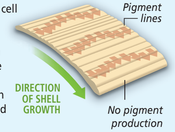
LINES PARALLEL TO THE DIRECTION OF GROWTH

A stable periodic production of pigment along the shell's edge. At regular distances, cell groups in the mantle produce pigment while cells in between do not. The process occurs at regularly spaced positions, creating parallel lines.



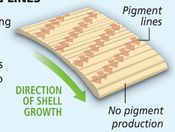
LINES PERPENDICULAR TO THE DIRECTION OF GROWTH

Created when a certain cell makes pigment only during a specific time and then enters into an inactive period until the next production phase. Synchronized changes in pigment production lead to stripes that are parallel to the axis.



OBLIQUE OR SLANTING LINES

These start from traveling waves of pigment production. When pigment-producing cells trigger neighbor cells to do the same after a certain time delay, such waves are created.



Bring a bag, some curiosity and these tips when you start a shelling adventure.

- Search where the waves break and where high tide ends.
- A full moon creates extra low tides and extra opportunities.
- The rarest shells aren't in one place, they can be anywhere at any time.
- A small shovel or rake can help you search through a pile of shells.
- After a storm, you'll have a better chance of finding uncommon shells.

Please remember it's prohibited to collect any shells with a living creature inside.