

# Bivalve Shellfish Identification

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## Manila Littleneck Clam

**Size and Shape:** Up to 2.5 inches. Oblong (similar to native littlenecks but more oval).

**Shell:** Concentric rings with radiating line ridges. Siphon tips are split. Color can vary—typically grey, brown, or mottled. Some purple on the inside shell.

**Depth:** 2-4 inches.

**Habitat:** Gravel, mud, sand. Above the half-tide level.

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## Native Littleneck Clam

**Size and Shape:** Up to 3.5 inches. Rounded (similar to Manila clams but more round).

**Shell:** Concentric rings with radiating ridge lines. Siphon tips are fused. Color can vary – typically cream, grey, brown, or mottled. White inside shell.

**Depth:** 6-10 inches.

**Habitat:** Gravel, mud. Normally mid-tide level, sometimes lower intertidal or subtidal zone (up to 60 feet).

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## Butter Clam

**Size and Shape:** Up to 5 inches. Heavy for size. Oval to square.

**Shell:** Concentric rings. No radiating ridge lines. Yellow to grey/white colored.

**Depth:** 12-18 inches.

**Habitat:** Sand, gravel, cobble. Lower intertidal or shallow subtidal zone (up to 60 feet).

**Warning! Butter clams retain marine biotoxins longer than other clams.**

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## Varnish Clam

**Size and Shape:** Up to 3 inches. Oval, flat.

**Shell:** Concentric rings and shiny brown coating. Purple inside the shell.

**Depth:** 1-2 inches.

**Habitat:** Gravel, cobble, mud, sand. Upper one-third of the intertidal zone but can range into lower tidal level. Most abundant near freshwater inputs.

**Warning! Varnish clams retain marine biotoxins longer and at higher levels than other clams.**

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## Cockle Clam

**Size and Shape:** Up to 5 inches. Round, somewhat triangular (pointed hinge).

**Shell:** Prominent evenly-spaced radiating ridges which fan out from the hinge. Mottled, light brown color.

**Depth:** 1-2 inches.

**Habitat:** Sand, mud. Intertidal or subtidal zone (up to 50-60 feet).

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## Macoma Clam

**Size and Shape:** Up to 4 inches. Oval to square, to somewhat triangular.

**Shell:** Wafer-thin, chalky-white shell may be bent at siphon end.

**Depth:** 4-6 inches.

**Habitat:** Sand, mud. Middle intertidal zone.

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## Horse Clam

**Size and Shape:** Up to 8 inches. Oval.

**Shell:** Chalky-white with yellow/brown patches of "skin" on the shell. Shell gapes around siphon. Siphon can't be fully pulled into shell and has a leather-like flap on the tip.

**Depth:** 1-2 feet.

**Habitat:** Sand, mud, gravel. Lower intertidal zone (up to 50-60 feet).



## Eastern Softshell Clam

**Size and Shape:** Up to 6 inches. Oval to square.

**Shell:** Brittle, thin shells with rough irregular surface and uneven concentric rings. Chalky-white to grey with brown/yellow skin on the edges. Rounded at foot, pointed at siphon end.

**Depth:** 8-18 inches.

**Habitat:** Sand, mud. Upper half-tide level near river mouths (low salinity).



## Geoduck

**Size and Shape:** Shell up to 10 inches. Weighs an average of 2.5 pounds and up to 10 pounds. Oblong, appears rounded at one end and cut-off at the other end.

**Shell:** Gaping oblong shell with concentric rings. White shell with flaky brown skin. Siphon and mantle are too large to withdraw into shell.

**Depth:** 2-3 feet.

**Habitat:** Mud, sand, gravel. Subtidal zone (some intertidal, accessible only on extreme low tides).



## Razor Clam

**Size and Shape:** Up to 6 inches. Oblong.

**Shell:** Gaping oblong shell with concentric rings. Brown shell. Siphon is too large to withdraw into shell.

**Depth:** 6 inches or more (moves rapidly downward when dug).

**Habitat:** Sand. Intertidal coastal zone (ocean beaches).



## Mussels

**Size and Shape:** Blue mussel up to 3 inches. California mussel up to 6 inches. Oblong shape.

**Shell:** Blue-black or brown shell.

**Habitat:** Attaches to rocks, pilings, boats, gravel, or other hard surfaces in the intertidal zone.



## Oysters

**Size and Shape:** Up to 12 inches for some species. Oblong with irregular, wavy edges.

**Shell:** Chalky white or grey.

**Habitat:** Rocky beaches in the intertidal zone.



**Shellfish safety information:** [www.doh.wa.gov/shellfish](http://www.doh.wa.gov/shellfish)

Clam photos: WDFW. Mussel photo: InspiredImages, Pixabay. Oyster photo: ThurstonTalk.

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