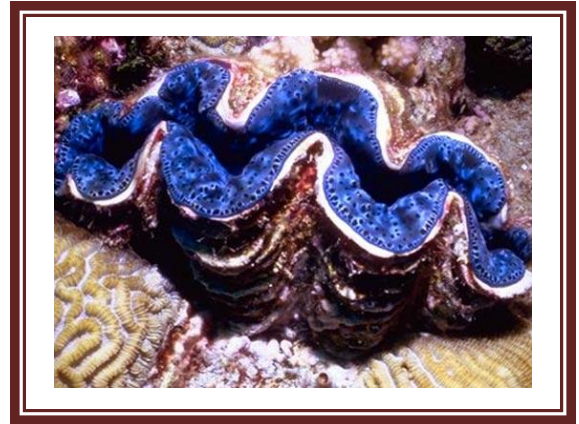


# The Pier Aquarium presents the Celebrity Critter of the Week!



<http://www.barrierreefaustralia.com/>

## Giant Clam

**Scientific Name:** *Tridacna gigas*

**Description:** Characterized by having 4-5 large, inward-facing triangular projections of the shell aperture. The mantle is usually golden brown, yellow, or green with many blue, purple, or green spots.

**Habitat:** Found throughout the tropical, Indo-Pacific Ocean from the south China seas to the northern coast of Australia.

## Top 10 Facts:

1. The Giant Clam is the largest living bivalve mollusk, growing up to 4' across and weighing up to 450 pounds.
2. There are actually nine species within the *Tridacna* genus with the smallest being just under 8 inches across.
3. The Giant Clam's mantle (fleshy part) acts as habitat for the symbiotic single-celled algae *zooxanthellae*. During the day, the giant clam spreads out its mantle tissue so the algae can get the sunlight it needs to photosynthesize.
4. In the past, people considered the Giant Clam to be a "maneater." Today, scientists know the process of closing the shell valves is not an aggressive but a defensive response, and is far, far too slow to pose any real danger to humans.
5. In Japan, the meat of the Giant Clam, called *Himejako*, is prized as a delicacy.
6. Once fully grown, Giant Clams cannot completely close their shell.
7. They occupy coral reef habitats, typically within 20 meters of the surface and are most commonly found in shallow lagoons and reef flats embedded in sandy substrates or coral rubble.
8. These clams reproduce sexually via broadcast spawning.
9. Larvae, called veligers, must swim and feed in the water column until they are developed enough to settle on a suitable substrate and begin life as a sessile clam.
10. Some giant clams have pale or clear spots, referred to as "windows" on the mantle, that may allow more light into the mantle tissue for the photosynthetic *zooxanthellae*.