

Sunray Venus Clam, *Macrocallista nimbosa*

Range and Habitat

Range: North Carolina to Florida to Texas
Salinity: 25-35 psu
Depth:
Habitat: Sandy coastal bottoms
Size: 35 - 150 mm



Commercial Importance

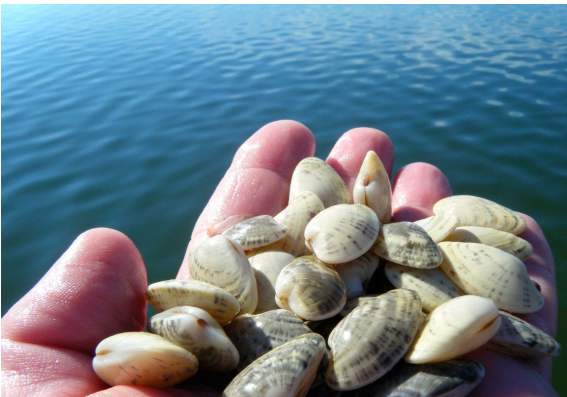
Though harvesting of sunrays has been explored around the state of Florida, they have never been commercially grown due to a lack of understanding of their life history. Recent research on their reproductive cycle ([Barber 2017](#)) and developing best management practices for aquaculture have revealed that sunray venus clams are an excellent candidate for diversifying Florida's aquaculture industry.

Ecological Importance

Sunray venus clams are filter feeders that graze on primary production (phytoplankton) and filter out suspended particles from the water column. Through assimilation of phytoplankton and deposition of feces and pseudofeces, sunray venus clams transfer carbon and nitrogen to benthic food chains and sediments. Sunrays are capable of reproducing year-round, making them a consistent filtering force in their ecosystems.

Recovery & Restoration

Though sunray venus clams have never been at significant risk, historic, small-scale harvesting in the 1960s and 70s showed that they have strong economic value. However, natural stocks could not sustain a commercial industry and interest was lost. Advances in culturing and aquaculture of the species are necessary to avoid future exploitation of natural stocks.



The Gulf Shellfish Institute offers the following capabilities to any group interested in restoration projects involving clams:

- Production of juvenile (4 mm seed) clams in commercial hatcheries
- Seed grown on commercial leases (state-owned submerged land) until desired size (up to 60 mm) is attained
- Planting seed at desired density
- Monitoring of clam growth and survival, sea grass growth, and environmental parameters (sediment and water quality)