

Aquatic Life

Sea anemones and jellyfish belong to a group of animals known as cnidarians (pronounced nid-ar-ians) - the jelly animals. These animals often resemble flowers, with their soft, colourful, sac-like body and rings of tentacles around the mouth. They can be found as single individuals, which are known as polyps, or joined with others to form a group or colony.

Cnidarians have many tiny stinging cells on their tentacles, which they use for self-defence and to catch food. In some species, the sting is powerful enough to be dangerous to humans.



Beadlet Anemone

The **Beadlet Anemone** the most common anemone found on rocky shores around Ireland, and is often first noticed as a blob of jelly on the rocks. It is usually red in colour but there are also green and orange-brown varieties. Look out for the blue, bead-like warts at the base of the tentacles, and a thin blue line edging the base of the column.



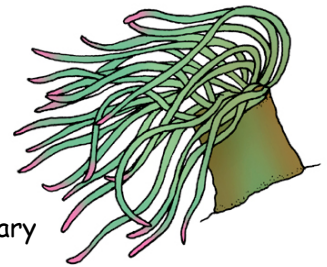
Blobs of Jelly!

Sea anemones often appear like blobs of jelly on the shore, as many are able to pull in their tentacles. They react like this if they are disturbed, or when the tide goes out, as it helps prevent drying out and damage. A slimy mucus coating also helps to keep moisture in.



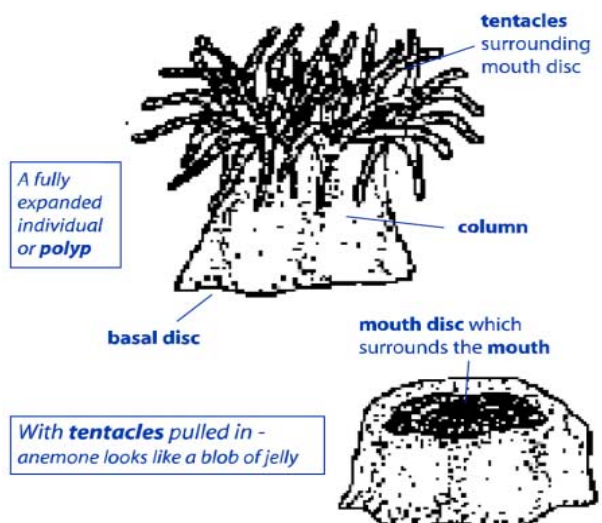
Sea Anemones

To identify the different sea anemones, the features we usually use are colour, shape and tentacle number. You should keep in mind, though, that colour, in particular, may vary in different environments. The anemones that live on rocky shores attach themselves firmly to rocks and stones with a sticky basal disc, but are still able to move. In anemones that live on soft muddy shores, the basal disc and column have adapted to burrowing. Anemones are solitary or single cnidarians and, although many may cover a rock surface, they are not joined together in any way.



Snakelocks Anemone

A typical sea anemone



Their Relative - the Jellyfish

Their close relatives, the jellyfish, are similar but they inhabit the open sea and are found on the shore only when stranded.



Fact File:

Habitat: On the rocky shore, in crevices, rockpools & under seaweeds

Colour: Varies from red to orange to green to brown, with blue warts

Size: 2-7cm in diameter

