

University of Hawai‘i-Mānoa  
Waikīkī Aquarium  
Education Department



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University of Hawai‘i-Mānoa

## MARINE LIFE PROFILE: SHINGLE SEA URCHIN

Hawaiian name: hā‘uke‘uke  
Scientific name: *Colobocentrotus atratus*  
Distribution: Indo-Pacific, including Hawai‘i  
Size: to 3 inches diameter  
Diet: coralline algae

This distinctive sea urchin is found only in the wave impact zone where it is subject to the full force of the surf. The rounded shape and flattened, shingle-like spines are adaptations for withstanding the force of the incoming waves. Its low profile also presents little resistance as the water surges back and forth, so that the urchin is pulled off the rocks. Sucker-tipped tube feet on the urchin’s bottom surface, and moveable spines around the body edge help the animal cling to the shore.

The shingle urchin is a herbivore, grazing on the cement-like red coralline algae (*Porolithon*) which forms a pink band on the rocks around mean tide level.

### Classification:

Kingdom Animalia  
Phylum Echinodermata  
Class Echinoidea  
Order Echinoidea  
Family Echinometridae

