



Starry, Starry, Starfish

WRITTEN BY DIANE E. ROBERTSON
VENICE GULF COAST LIVING MAGAZINE

Whether you live here year-round or seasonally, chances are you occasionally enjoy walking on one of our beautiful beaches. As the tide rushes in, lovely shells and other coastal treasures are washed ashore. If you're especially fortunate, you may come across a sea star, more commonly known as a starfish, which are one of the ocean's most popular and remarkable creatures.

Starfish are extraordinary for many reasons. First of all, they are marine animals, not fish, and belong to the phylum *Echinodermata*. About 1,800 living species of starfish exist in the world's oceans, with the greatest variety found in the northern Pacific. These tiny creations possess neither bones nor muscles. Instead of blood, they filter seawater throughout their systems. Tube feet are located on the starfish's "legs" or points, and these appendages assist with feeding, circulating oxygen, moving, and clinging to rocks. Starfish usually have five points, although some display more. At the end of some points is a simple eye which can only distinguish differences between light and dark. These magnificent critters range in color from red to violet, with an occasional green and blue in some species.

Although starfish are passive on land, they are insatiable predators beneath the sea. Their digestive systems are unique, allowing them to eat small fish and mollusks, and then digest them in one of two separate stomachs—the cardiac or the pyloric. The cardiac stomach can be pushed outside the body to swallow and digest food. Some species use their water filter systems to force clam and oyster shells open, and inject their stomachs into the shells. The starfish can then absorb its entire meal right there. The pyloric stomach later transports the digested food to nourish the rest of the starfish.

The next time you're out for a walk on the beach, keep your eyes open for one of these wondrous marine creatures.



BY CHRISTIANE FRANCCIN
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A Starfish Holiday!

Have you ever thought of topping your Christmas tree with a starfish instead of your usual seasonal ornament or surrounding the base of it with shells instead of a traditional skirt? How about nestling some silk hibiscus flowers in the nooks and crannies of your tree?

Want to create a look that will transport yourself and your guests back to the beach, recalling cherished moments of experiencing the Suncoast's beautiful sunsets together with your family and friends? The holidays can be the perfect time to recall those special outings, and using coastal design elements such as collected starfish and seashells can help bring to mind those treasured memories. To create the ideal seaside palette, try incorporating décor items in soft blues hues and combining them with dramatic pops of bright yellow and a variety of orange shades. Add even more color and flair to the theme by infusing tropical fruit and flowers into your décor, and you'll have the perfect setting for ringing in a festive coastal season!

Take a glimpse throughout these pages at our 2018 holiday collection of decorating ideas, and you may find all the inspiration you need to celebrate a seaside style holiday this year!

* Perfect for the foyer or right inside the front door, these painted starfish and Carmen Miranda-style fruit décor make an adorable holiday statement. Featuring colorful sea stars, mini Santa hats, festive ornaments and white felt—all of which can be found at your local craft store—this design takes just minutes to assemble. Simply create a mustache and beard from the felt, then attach it to a pineapple. Next, hot glue the starfish and fruit together. When your masterpiece is complete, place it by your front door to extend a warm, whimsical welcome to your arriving guests.



Create your own coastal Christmas tree this year! Begin to make your special piece of festive art by having a sheet of plywood cut to whatever dimensions you desire and spray painting it aqua blue. After it dries, use a strong glue that can withstand high temperatures to attach shells to form the tree, then top your design with a stunning starfish. Frame your unique artwork and hang it anywhere in your home to give it a lovely seaside holiday atmosphere.

Coastal cottage charm is the star attraction of this guest room. The look is easy to recreate—just place a small bouquet of flowers within an aqua vase and some seaside treasures on the bed stand. A simple arrangement, it will set the mood for your guests, signaling that they are about to enjoy a beach-inspired holiday! ♡



DECORATING TIPS

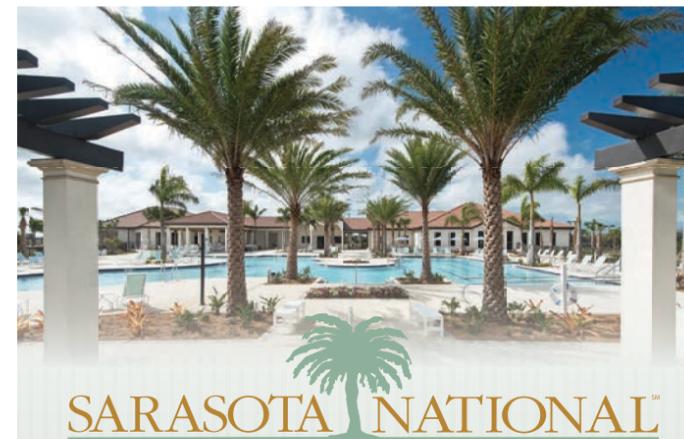
Find real, dried starfish as well as artificial ones in craft and specialty stores.

Add starfish to wreaths or position them in a straight row above your windows. When hot-glued to satin ribbons, they can hang from the ceiling. If you use fishing line, they will look like they are floating in the air!

Create a collage of floating starfish by selecting different sizes to display. Hot glue triangle picture hangers onto the back of one of the legs or the center of each starfish. Arrange as desired above your bed or on any wall in your home.

Give your indoor and outdoor plants a festive touch by inserting starfish into their containers.

Line the outside entry path with starfish or scatter them in the garden.



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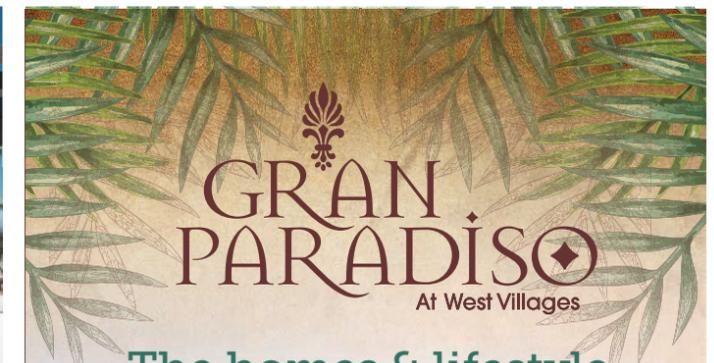
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ON THE TABLE



Choosing a color palette for your tree decoration is always fun! Bring together shades of blue, silver, white, orange and pink, and you have created a color scheme for your holiday tree taken right from a beautiful beach sunset!

Surround your pool or bath areas with towels inspired by nature's hues, and for a note of seaside charm, angle a starfish onto a pair of towels placed on a wicker tray. Combine this with ready-to-drink glasses of freshly squeezed orange juice that are set out in just the right places, and you can't miss! These items will remind your guests they are in paradise, the place where they get to view spectacular sky colors... and the next show begins at sunset!

Elegance and coastal charm come together as you scatter starfish and seashells on your dining table to create the perfect seaside setting.

Achieve charming seaside appeal by placing cute star-studded shell place cards on your table. You can easily make these with a hot glue gun, small pieces of card stock paper and miniature starfish.



Keeping with the starfish theme, offer your guests festive drinks poolside on a tray adorned with beautiful stars.