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During low spring tides the full glory of marine life on rocky shores is revealed. One of the species most characteristic of the lowest part of the shore is the pear limpet *Scutellastra cochlear*, which reaches extraordinary densities, seen here forming a mosaic in the foreground. Surrounding each animal is a narrow fringe of delicate red seaweed that is nurtured by the limpet, which territorially bumps away other grazers, fertilises the seaweed with its ammonia excretions, and weeds the 'garden' to eliminate other species of algae that might overgrow it. It is these private 'gardens' that allow the pear limpet to attain such remarkable densities.

Photo and text: George Branch
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