

Kaiji Hama (Kaiji Beach): Star Sand and Subtropical Foliage

The subtropical vegetation along the coastline, among the few natural forests remaining in Okinawa, makes the beach area a rewarding spot to observe Taketomi's diverse natural environment.

Each of Taketomi's beaches – north, south, east, and west – has its own unique characteristics, but the most distinct feature here is *hoshizuna* (star sand), which is made up of star-shaped particles. These are the remains of the single-celled marine organism *Baculogypsina sphaerulata* that are washed up on shore after becoming attached to marine vegetation. These creatures give the waters their emerald-green appearance.

Folk belief has it that star sand brings happiness. According to an old tale from *Aiyaru Hama* (Aiyaru Beach), the tiny forms are the bones of baby stars that were eaten by a great sea serpent. Burning them in an incense burner allows the star-children to return to heaven.

PLANTS (NB: Japanese romaji and hiragana for graphics positioning only)

- A) Gajumaru がじゅまる Banyan (*Ficus benghalensis*)
- B) Momotamana ももたまな Indian almond (*Terminalia catappa*)
- C) Oohamahou おおはまほう Hamabo hibiscus (*Hibiscus hamabo*)
- D) Hasunohagiri はすのはぎり Lantern tree (*Hernandia nymphaeaefolia*)
- E) Terihakusatobera てりはくさとべら Japanese pittosporum (*Pittosporum tobira*)
- F) Soushiju そうしじゅ Acacia petit (*Acacia confusa*)
- G) Terihaboku てりはぼく Beauty leaf (*Calophyllum inophyllum*)
- H) Sotetsu そてつ Cycad (*Cycas revoluta*)
- I) Monpanoki もんぱのき Common heliotrope (*Heliotrope arborescens*)
- J) Adan あだん Screw pine (*Pandanus odorifer*)
- K) Hamadaikon はまだいこん Japanese wild radish (*Raphanus sativus* L. var. *raphanistroides*)

L) Getto げつとう Shell ginger (*Alpinia zerumbet*)

M) Gunpahirugao ぐんぱいひるがお Seaside morning glory (*Ipomoea pes-caprae*)

N) Hamayu はまゆう Spider lily (*Crinum asiaticum*)