**Mallotonia gnaphalodes Sea Lavender**

Edward F. Gilman

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**Introduction**

Sea lavender is one of the best adapted small shrubs or tall ground covers for the seaside landscape (Fig. 1). Its pubescent, silvery foliage is borne in tufts toward the ends of branches. Small white flowers are produced year-round among the developing leaves. Despite their small size, their abundance allows them to provide a nice showy display. Plants grow slowly, eventually reaching about 5 feet tall. Many are smaller than this when exposed to direct salt spray, but they often grow very wide.

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**General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Mallotonia gnaphalodes*

**Pronunciation:** mal-loe-TOE-nee-uh naf-fuh-LOE-deez

**Common name(s):** sea lavender

**Family:** Boraginaceae

**Plant type:** shrub; ground cover

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Uses:** reclamation plant; border; mass planting; ground cover

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

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Figure 1. Sea lavender

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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**Description**

Height: 2 to 5 feet  
Spread: 6 to 20 feet  
Plant habit: spreading  
Plant density: dense  
Growth rate: slow  
Texture: fine

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: alternate  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: entire  
Leaf shape: spatulate  
Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see  
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen  
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches  
Leaf color: blue or blue-green  
Fall color: no fall color change  
Fall characteristic: not showy

**Flower**

Flower color: white  
Flower characteristic: fall flowering; winter flowering

**Fruit**

Fruit shape: round  
Fruit length: less than .5 inch  
Fruit cover: fleshy  
Fruit color: black  
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems  
Current year stem/twig color: green  
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

**Culture**

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun  
Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand; loam;  
Drought tolerance: high  
Soil salt tolerances: good  
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

**Other**

Roots: usually not a problem  
Winter interest: no special winter interest  
Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive  
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Use and Management**

Sea lavender is best used in seaside plantings with other dune-resistant vegetation. Planted inland, they often develop root rot in irrigated landscapes. A full sun location keeps foliage dry and helps maintain plant health. Plants in partial shade thin and grow poorly.

**Pests and Diseases**

Root rot is probably the biggest problem in irrigated landscapes.