

Ipomoea pes-caprae Beach Morning Glory¹

Edward F. Gilman²

Introduction

The beach morning glory is an herbaceous vine that grows wild on ocean shores from Florida to Texas and Georgia (Fig. 1). This plant reaches a height of 4 to 6 inches, but the stems may creep along the ground to a length of 75 feet. It roots and occasionally branches from the nodes and develops a long, thick, starchy root. The 2 1/2- to 4-inch-long leaves are thick, smooth, and two-lobed; the leaf shape reminds one of a goat's footprint or perhaps an orchid tree leaf. The beach morning glory is truly charming when in bloom. Funnel-shaped flowers that are 2 1/2 to 3 inches wide occur in the summer and fall. The flowers are pinkish lavender with purple-red throats. They open in the early morning and close before noon each day that the plant is in bloom. Small, round seedpods that contain four velvety, dark brown seeds appear on this plant after flowering.

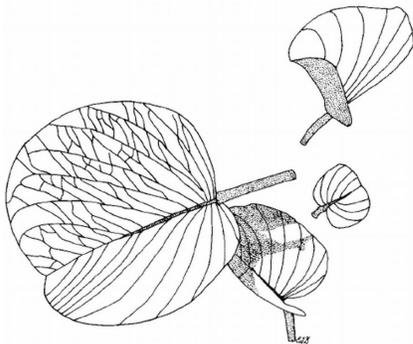


Figure 1. Beach morning glory

General Information

Scientific name: *Ipomoea pes-caprae*

Pronunciation: ipp-oh-MEE-uh pess-kuh-PREE

Common name(s): railroad vine, beach morning glory

Family: *Convolvulaceae*

Plant type: ground cover

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

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: ground cover

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



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

1. This document is FPS-283, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

Description

Height: depends upon supporting structure

Spread: depends upon supporting structure

Plant habit: spreading; prostrate (flat)

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: lobed

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: purple

Flower characteristic: summer flowering; fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand; loam;

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: good

Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

The beach morning glory is well adapted to beaches and coastal dunes. It is useful as a sand binder and ground cover, even on the ocean side of the first dune. They grow right down to the high tide mark on the beach. Plant on 3-foot centers to quickly form a ground cover. It may not be well suited for home landscapes because it grows too quickly and has a very open growth habit.

This full sun plant will prosper on most well-drained soils. It grows very rapidly and needs to be pruned and contained if planted in a landscape. To say the plant grows quickly is to preach the truth. The beach morning glory will tolerate very high levels of salt spray but cannot endure over watering. Basically, plant it, water a few times and leave the sprinkler off.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.