

Uniola paniculata Sea Oats¹

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Introduction

Sea oats once blanketed the coastal landscape along the southeastern United States from North Carolina to south Florida (Fig. 1). Now they are endangered. They were the primary dune stabilizer and will grow right up to the high tide mark along the beach. Plants spread by means of underground rhizomes. Each plant develops a showy inflorescence about 5 feet tall. The oat-like fruit persists on the plant, giving the plant a nice texture as the wind blows. Existing plants should be saved wherever possible, and planting should be encouraged along the beaches.



Figure 1. Sea oats

General Information

Scientific name: *Uniola paniculata*

Pronunciation: yoo-NYE-oh-luh pan-nick-yoo-LAY-tuh

Common name(s): sea oats

Family: *Gramineae*

Plant type: herbaceous; ornamental grass

USDA hardiness zones: 7B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: mass planting

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

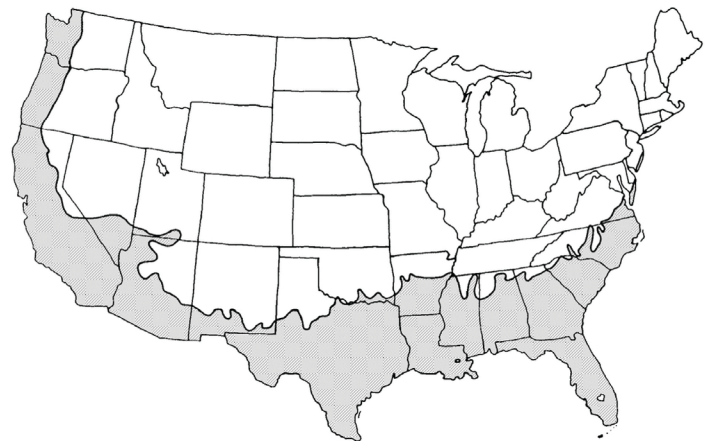


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 5 to 8 feet

Spread: 1 to 2 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: open

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

1. This document is FPS-594, 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>.

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Foliage

Leaf arrangement: most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: linear

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 12 to 18 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristic: spring flowering; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristic: persists on the plant

Trunk Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: not applicable

Current year stem/twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: good

Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant

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

Use and Management

You could not find a more drought tolerant plant for along the coast. Plant sea oats several feet apart to stabilize dunes

along the beach. It is illegal to collect plants from the wild without special permits. Place sea oats in an area of the landscape that receives full sun. This plant may be grown throughout Florida.

Pests and Diseases

There are no known problems growing sea oats.