

# *Canavalia maritima* Beach Bean, Bay Bean<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Beach bean is a dense ground cover that is commonly found in the coastal sands of southeast Florida. This plant forms a ground cover that is 6 to 12 inches in height but can occasionally be found climbing a small tree. The evergreen, trifoliate leaves have elliptic, 2½ to 3½ inch-long leaflets that are rounded at their apices. Small racemes of pink to purple flowers occur among these bright green leaves throughout the year. These beautiful flowers are followed by robust, woody pods.



Figure 1. Flower—*Canavalia maritima*: Beach Bean, Bay Bean  
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Flower—*Canavalia maritima*: Beach Bean, Bay Bean  
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Canavalia maritima*

**Pronunciation:** kan-uh-VAL-ee-uh muh-RIT-tim-uh

**Common name(s):** beach bean, bay bean

**Family:** Leguminosea

**Plant type:** vine; ground cover

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Figure 3)

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

**Origin:** native to Florida

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Figure 3. Shaded area represents potential planting range.  
Credits: undefined

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**Uses:** cascading down a wall

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

## Description

**Height:** depends upon supporting structure

**Spread:** depends upon supporting structure

**Plant habit:** prostrate (flat); spreading

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** coarse

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** trifoliate

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval)

**Leaf venation:** brachidodrome; 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:** year-round flowering

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** pod or pod-like

**Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches

**Fruit cover:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** not applicable

**Current year stem/twig color:** not applicable

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** not applicable

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam

**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:** not particularly outstanding

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

## Use and Management

This ground cover resists erosion by wind and light surf and is ideal for coastal landscapes. The bright green leaves and showy flowers of this plant are sure eye-catchers. It is a wonderful utility plant for stabilizing sandy soils and makes a nice bed for trees and shrubs. It might climb up onto dense shrubs and the trunks of trees. This could be a maintenance problem for some landscapes.

Beach bean, as the name implies, has a high drought and salt spray tolerance. It prefers well-drained soils and full sun exposures.

## Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.