

# *Ernodea littoralis* Golden Creeper<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

The golden creeper is a 1 to 3 foot tall, prostrate ground cover that is native to south Florida beaches. This plant has small, light green, succulent leaves borne on bright red stems that help it to survive in dry conditions. Inconspicuous, pinkish white, tubular flowers occur throughout the year and are followed by attractive golden berries. These golden berries, in part, give this plant its common name.



Figure 1. Full Form - *Ernodea littoralis*: Golden Creeper  
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Leaf - *Ernodea littoralis*: Golden Creeper  
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Figure 3. Flower - *Ernodea littoralis*: Golden Creeper  
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

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Figure 4. Fruit - *Ernodea littoralis*: Golden Creeper  
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## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Ernodea littoralis*

**Pronunciation:** air-NOE-dee-uh lit-taw-RAIL-liss

**Common name(s):** golden creeper, beach creeper, coughbush

**Family:** *Rubiaceae*

**Plant type:** ground cover

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Figure 5)



Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

**Origin:** native to Florida

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

**Uses:** ground cover

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

## Description

**Height:** 1 to 3 feet

**Spread:** depends upon supporting structure

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

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** fine

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** ovate

**Leaf venation:** bowed

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristic:** year-round flowering

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch

**Fruit cover:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** yellow

**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:** reddish

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium

## Culture

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

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

**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

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

## Use and Management

The golden creeper is an excellent sand binder and is great for coastal landscapes. This ground cover is an outstanding landscape plant for south Florida coastal areas and could be used more often. It is also suited for planting in dry landscapes away from the coast receiving little or no irrigation.

Golden creeper will thrive in well-drained sandy soils. It should be planted in an area of the landscape that receives full sun. *Ernodea littoralis* is tolerant of drought and salt spray but often dies back if over irrigated.

## Pests and Diseases

Plants in well drained soils along the coast in the full sun usually have no problems.