

# *Leucothoe axillaris* Dog Hobble, Coastal Leucothoe<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This graceful and informal shrub may grow 2 to 6 feet in height and may spread 6 to 10 feet. Its arching stoloniferous stems support large, glossy, evergreen leaves. These dark green leaves turn to a purple-green color in the winter. The April flowers of coastal leucothoe are very small and occur in bell-shaped racemes. These flowers are white or pinkish-white and are borne in the leaf axils. The fruits of this shrub are inconspicuous capsules.



Figure 1. Full Form—*Leucothoe axillaris*: Dog hobble, coastal leucothoe.

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Leaf— *Leucothoe axillaris*: Dog hobble, coastal leucothoe.

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## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Leucothoe axillaris*

**Pronunciation:** loo-KAHTH-oh-ee ack-sil-LAIR-iss

**Common name(s):** dog hobble, coastal leucothoe, coastal doghobble

**Family:** *Ericaceae*

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5B through 9 (Figure 3)

**Planting month for zone 7:** year-round

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**Planting month for zone 8:** year-round

**Planting month for zone 9:** year-round

**Origin:** native to Florida

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

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

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

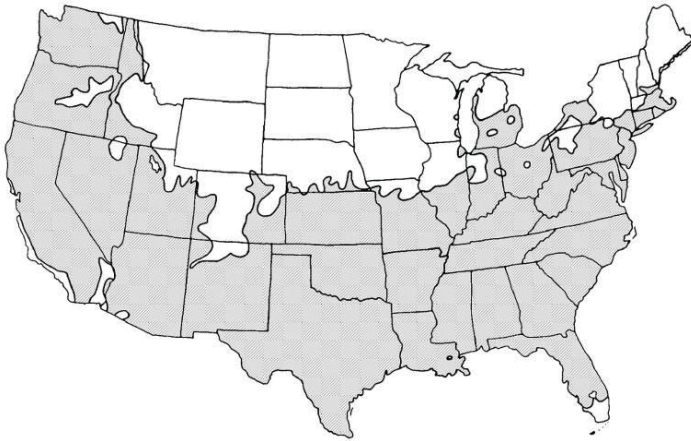


Figure 3. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## Description

**Height:** 2 to 6 feet

**Spread:** 6 to 10 feet

**Plant habit:** spreading

**Plant density:** dense

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** serrate; serrulate

**Leaf shape:** ovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

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

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** purple

**Fall characteristic:** showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** white; pinkish white

**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering; inconspicuous and not showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval

**Fruit length:** less than 0.5 inch

**Fruit cover:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy

**Current year stem/twig color:** brown

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

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in the shade

**Soil tolerances:** occasionally wet; acidic; sand; loam; clay

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** poor

**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

## Other

**Roots:** usually not a problem

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

**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Pest resistance:** very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

## Use and Management

Coastal leucothoe is outstanding in masses and is a good choice for enclosed city gardens. It is commonly used in the landscape as a specimen, ground cover, and border plant. This shrub is also impressive when naturalized along wooded stream banks.

Coastal leucothoe should be grown in a partially or densely shaded site; it grows best in areas that receive morning sunlight. The soil in its natural, bald cypress dome habitat has a high organic matter and silt content and is acidic. This makes dog hobble a good choice for shaded, wet sites. This plant can be rejuvenated into vigorous growth in the center of the plant if the 2- and 3-year-old canes are removed after bloom.

Coastal leucothoe is propagated by seeds and cuttings.

## Pests and Diseases

Leaf spots may cause coastal leucothoe to look undesirable; at least 8 species of fungi infect *Leucothoe* spp. When this plant is grown in conditions that are not ideal, leaf spot will produce ugly lesions that often enlarge and consume the entire leaf. Root rot problems may also occur in wet soil.