

Scaevola plumieri Inkberry¹

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Introduction

Inkberry is a 2 to 3 foot tall shrub with succulent stems that spread to form dense clumps. Stems root as they touch the ground. The foliage is clustered toward the tips of the branches and is thick, fleshy, and a glossy, medium green color. The flowers are 0.75 to 1 inch in length, 5 to 6 lobed, and found in small clusters among the foliage. They are barely noticeable. The lobes of the flowers are split vertically and spread out like a fan to suggest a half flower instead of a whole flower. The fruits are black, glossy, smooth, and fairly prominent among the foliage. They are bitter to taste but are harmless if only one is eaten.



Figure 1. Full Form—*Scaevola plumieri*: Inkberry.
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Figure 2. Leaf and Fruit—*Scaevola plumieri*: Inkberry.
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General Information

Scientific name: *Scaevola plumieri*

Pronunciation: see-VOLE-luh PLOO-meer-rye

Common name(s): inkberry, beachberry, gullfeed

Family: *Goodeniaceae*

Plant type: ground cover

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Figure 3)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year-round

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Origin: native to Florida

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Uses: border; mass planting; foundation; reclamation plant; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); medium sized parking lot islands (100–200 square feet in size); large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); ground cover; cascading down a wall

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



Figure 3. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 2 to 3 feet

Spread: 3 to 8 feet

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: spatulate

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see

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: white

Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: black

Fruit characteristic: showy

Trunk and Branches

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

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: alkaline; sand; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: good

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: sprouts from roots or lower trunk

Winter interest: no special winter interest

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

Inkberry can be used as a seaside ornamental, specimen, or ground cover. They grow nearly to the high tide mark on the ocean side of the dunes among the sea oats and other highly salt tolerant plants. They are most effective when massed together as a low ground cover or low shrub. They catch sand and help stabilize the dunes.

Inkberry is not harmed by salt spray and is found on sand dunes in southern Florida and the Florida Keys. It is drought tolerant and requires full sun. Plantings inland should be located in a well-drained landscape setting.

Seeds and the sprawling stems that have rooted naturally may be used for propagation.

Pest and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.