

## *Scaevola plumieri*

(see-VOLE-luh PLOO-meer-rye)

Inkberry; beachberry; fan flower; gullfeed; half-flower; waxy bush

**Family: Goodeniaceae**



The native *S. plumieri* foliage and fruits.

### **Inkberry**

**Synonyms (Discarded Names):** : *Scaevola ivifolia*;  
*Lobelia plumieri*; *Lobelia frutescens*

**Origin:** Florida; the Caribbean

**Zone:** USDA 10a-11 (minimum 30°F)

**Growth Rate:** Slow

**Flowering Months:** Spring through fall (nearly year-round)

**Leaf Persistence:** Evergreen

**Salt Tolerance:** High

**Drought Tolerance:** High

**Soil:** Wide range

**Nutritional Requirements:** Low

**Major Potential Pests:** None known

**Typical Dimensions:** 2-3 feet tall with a spread of 3-8 feet

**Propagation:** Seed; sprawling stems and stem cuttings

**Human hazards:** All parts are poisonous if ingested in large quantities

**Uses:** Ground cover; dune stabilization; small parking lot islands; cascading down a wall



Native *S. plumieri* in November on Captiva island.

### Natural Geographic Distribution

Inkberry is native to Florida and the Caribbean. However, drifting seeds of the *Scaevola plumieri* have made their way to Africa, the Pacific Islands, around the Gulf of Mexico and into Brazil and Ecuador. In Florida it is considered a threatened species. It occurs on coastal counties from Hillsborough County south on the Gulf coast and from Brevard County south on the Atlantic coast. It tolerates temperatures down to 30°F.

### Ecological Function

*Scaevola plumieri* is a beach colonizer, trapping sand and stabilizing the dunes on which other plants can become established. Inkberry grows in full sun and is highly drought, wind and salt tolerant. It can grow to 2 to 3 feet tall but its true size is sometimes concealed when it becomes covered with sand.

### Morphology, Growth Habit and Reproduction

Inkberry is a slow-growing, small shrub up to 4 feet in height with trailing succulent stems. Stems root as they touch the ground and can be detached and transplanted. The foliage is clustered toward the tips of the branches. Leaves are 2 to 4 inches long, thick, fleshy, and have a glossy dark green color. The flowers are white or very light pink, to 1 inch across, with 5 petals. The common name of fan flower comes from the arrangement of the petals, which are fused at the base and spread like a fan in a half-circle. The flowers are found in clusters among the foliage. They attract bees and butterflies. Birds, and reportedly iguanas, eat the fruit. The fruit is a drupe about the size of an olive and is fairly prominent among the foliage. It ripens to a glossy, purplish black and contains a single seed within a hard endocarp. Seeds germinate in about 6 weeks. Inkberry can be planted year round in south Florida. Plants growing on the landward face of the foredune have shown higher leaf and seed production.



S.H. Brown

The foliage is clustered towards the tip of the branches.



S.H. Brown

The five petals are fused at base and spread like a fan in a half-circle.



S.H. Brown

Flowers, fruits, and bony endocarps of *S. plumieri*. The endocarps contain the seeds.

**Comparison of *S. plumieri* and *S. taccada***

*Scaevola plumieri* is often confused with the invasive *S. taccada*, or beach naupaka. The latter is a taller plant, 3 to 10 feet tall, has larger leaves, a denser canopy and bears white fruits. *S. plumieri* on the other hand, has black fruits and stiffer, smaller leaves with a smooth, entire leaf margin. The invasive *S. taccada* grows much faster, displacing the native species. *S. taccada* is also more cold sensitive than the native species. Its supple leaves are cold damaged at 33°F. The native *Scaevola* will tolerate temperatures as low as 30°F. Caution should be used when selecting a *Scaevola*, as *S. taccada* is often sold in nurseries as the native inkberry and grows very quickly, displacing native plants such as inkberry and sea lavender.



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The invasive *S. taccada* has a larger leaf than the native *S. plumieri*.



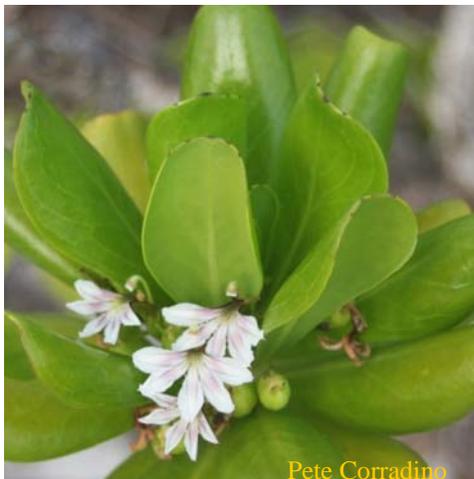
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Foliage and fruits of the native *S. plumieri*.



S.H. Brown

Foliage and fruits of the invasive *S. taccada*.



Pete Corradino

The five petals flowers of *S. taccada* are hard to distinguish from *S. plumieri*.



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The purplish black fruits of the native inkberry and the white fruits of the invasive naupaka.



The native *S. plumieri* growing on Sanibel in July has a sparser less compact canopy than *S. taccada*.



The non-native *S. taccada* forms a dense mound about 6 feet tall.

### **Planting and Maintenance Guidelines for Landscapes**

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. Ornamental plantings should be located in a well-drained soil. It does not tolerate standing water. Inkberry is most effective when massed together as a ground cover or low shrub. Plant year round in south Florida 36 to 60 inches apart.

This fact sheet was reviewed by Cathy Feser, Collier County Extension; Jenny Evans, Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation; Peggy Cruz, Lee County Extension Service; John Sibley, Lee County Master Gardener and owner of All Native Garden Center, Nursery & Landscapes, Fort Myers; Dr. Gary Knox, Environmental Horticulture Department, UF, Quincy and Dr. Hector Pérez, Environmental Horticulture Department, UF, Gainesville.

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