

Verbena maritima Beach Verbena ¹

Edward F. Gilman²

Introduction

This native verbena is well suited for along the coastal areas of Florida, but is now in danger of extinction in the wild (Fig. 1). Its tolerance to salt air and water makes it a great, perennial dune stabilizer. It adds color to the ground year-round. Purple or lavender flowers borne in clusters at the top of this 12-inch-tall ground cover stand out against the fine-textured foliage. Stems creep along the ground and root to bind the sand together. Sand builds up around the stems and foliage, helping prevent wind from blowing it back from the beach.

General Information

Scientific name: *Verbena maritima*

Pronunciation: ver-BEEN-nuh muh-RIT-tim-muh

Common name(s): beach verbena

Family: *Verbenaceae*

Plant type: ground cover; perennial; annual

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)

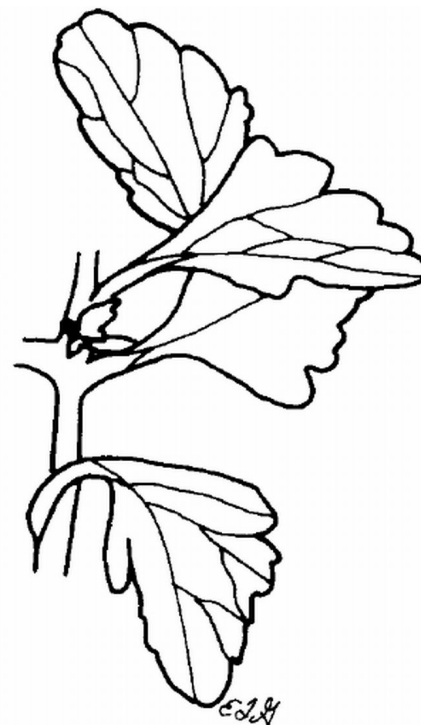


Figure 1. Beach verbena

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Feb; Mar; Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep; Oct; Nov; Dec

Origin: native to Florida

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Uses: ground cover; attracts butterflies; mass planting; naturalizing; container or above-ground planter

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

Description

Height: .5 to 1 feet

Spread: 3 to 5 feet

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: lobed

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: bowed; pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: purple; lavender

Flower characteristic: year-round flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: unknown

Fruit cover: unknown

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: moderate

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

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

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

To establish a solid ground cover, plant about 4 feet apart. Stems creep along the soil and plants will form a complete cover 18 to 24 months after planting. Plant in the full sun for fastest growth and best flowering. Foliage remains dark green with little or no care once plants are established. Although the plant is native to beaches, it should perform well in dry, inland landscapes in full sun.

Pests and Diseases

Few problems should impact this native verbena, provided it is not irrigated too much.