

SCAEVOLA SERICEA VAHL

Goodeniaceae/Goodenia Family

Common Names: Beach naupaka, Hawaiian half-flower, hailstones
Synonymy: *Scaevola frutescens* Krause, *S. taccada* (Gaertn.) Roxb.
Origin: East Africa to India, Southeast Asia, Australia, Pacific Islands

Botanical Description: Large, bushy shrub to 5 m (16 ft) tall, often forming dense hemispherical mounds. Leaves simple, closely alternate, crowded at stem tips; blades thick, shiny green, wider near tips, to 21 cm (8.3 in) long, glabrous to hairy on both sides, margins revolute, light green becoming yellow with age; leaf axils with tufts of pale hairs. Flowers white to pale lilac, several in short clusters at leaf axils; 5 petals, partially fused, split to base on upper side so that petal lobes spread fanlike into a lower lip. Fruit a fleshy, subspherical drupe, green then white, 8-12 mm (0.3-0.5 in) long, with sepal lobes persistent at tip.

NOTE: Often confused with the threatened Florida native half-flower, or inkberry, *Scaevola plumieri* (L.) Vahl, but its leaves shorter (to 10 cm, or 4 in, long), more succulent, with margins entire—and its mature fruit black, not white.

Ecological Significance: Apparently a recent introduction (Thieret and Brandenburg 1986), probably from Hawaii. Not mentioned in earlier works on Florida, but noted by Bailey and Bailey (1976) as occasionally planted in south Florida. Reported as escaped from cultivation in Lee County in 1982 (Wunderlin). Promoted in the early 1980s for use in beach stabilization projects—now discouraged (P. Flood, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, 1995 personal communication). Has escaped and become established on many south Florida beach dunes, coastal berms, coastal rock barrens, coastal strands, along saline shores, and in coastal hammocks (Nelson 1996). Appears to be supplanting native coastal vegetation in some Florida areas (Nellis 1994). Has begun to displace rare native beach plants, such as the inkberry, *S. plumieri*, and the Florida-endangered sea lavender, *Tournefortia gnaphalodes* (L.) R. Br. Ex Roem. & Schult., (J. Duquesnel, Florida Park Service, 1995 personal communication). Reported from parks and preserves in Monroe, Dade, Palm Beach, Martin, Collier, Lee, and Sarasota counties (EPPC 1996).

AF



Flower

Distribution: Native to coasts around the Indian and western Pacific oceans; common on seashores, sandy sites behind the shore, and on rocky shoreside cliffs, often forming dense thickets (Brizicky 1966, Whistler 1992, Wong 1995). Naturalized in Florida, the Bahamas, and perhaps elsewhere in tropical America (Thieret and Brandenburg 1986). In Florida, occurs on coasts from Sarasota and Martin counties south through the Keys to the Dry Tortugas.

Life History: Salt and wind tolerant on coasts, easy to grow, but sensitive to frost (Bar-Zvi 1996). Forms adventitious roots where stems contact soil. Sensitive to fire (Smith and Tunison 1992) and heavy shade (Herbst and Wagner 1992). Flowers and fruits year-round, but mostly from late spring to early fall. Fruits buoyant, with a corky outer layer, adapted to dispersal by ocean currents (Thieret and Brandenburg 1986). Fruits also eaten by pigeons and sea birds (Whistler 1992), and moved by ghost crabs and raccoons (R. Hammer, Miami-Dade County Natural Resources Department, 1998 personal communication). Seeds long viable in sea water, up to a year or more (Brizicky 1966), but will germinate only with fresh water, such as when washed ashore on a rainy day (Lesko and Walker 1969).

JD



In Bahia Honda State Park

RH



Leaves, flowers