

Native Plants Common to South Carolina's Beaches and Coastal Areas

ABOUT 2/3 ACTUAL SIZE



Hydrocotyle bonariensis Lamark

Seaside Pennywort-Leaves round with scalloped edges, peltate. Plant smooth, fleshy. Creeping stem roots at nodes.



Croton punctatus Jacquin

Silver-leaf Croton-Leaves alternate, egg-shaped and widest at base (ovate). Some petioles at least 1/2 as long as leaf blade. Shrub-like growth pattern with brownish-gray appearance.



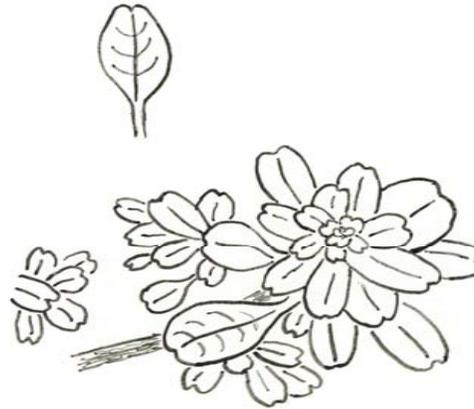
Ipomoea pes-caprae (L.) R.Br.

Railroad Vine-Leaves alternate, coriaceous (leather textured), with 2 rounded lobes resembling a goat's footprint. Trailing vine. When present, flowers trumpet-shaped, pink to light purple with dark throat.



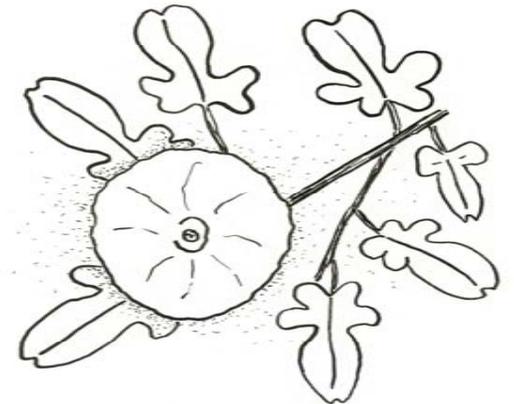
Strophostyles helvola (L.) Ell.

Beach Pea-Leaves alternate, compound, trifoliate. Seeds elongated, slender, bean pods. Delicate, trailing vine. When present, flowers rose to purple.



Amaranthus pumilus Rafinesque

Seabeach amaranth-Leaves alternate, thick and fleshy, slightly emergent, spoon-shaped. When present, flowers in close clusters or bundles at base of leaf petiole. Federally threatened.



Ipomoea stolonifera (Synlla) Poir.

Beach Morning Glory-Leaves alternate, coriaceous, oblong or fiddle-shaped, usually with 2-4 lobes. Trailing vine. When present, flowers trumpet-shaped, white throughout.

**IDENTIFICATION KEY USEFUL
IN DISTINGUISHING BEACH VITEX
(*Vitex rotundifolia*) FROM 6 NATIVE PLANT
SPECIES FOUND ON CAROLINA BEACHES**

A. Leaves opposite, oval to round with a tiny point at tip, short petioles (leaf stalks) in pairs from long woody vine-like stems; leaves gray-green above, silvery beneath; spicy fragrance when crushed; when present, flowers purplish-blue in terminal clusters; fruits 1/4 inch diameter, round, purplish-black when ripe. **Beach Vitex** (*Vitex rotundifolia* L.).

A. Leaves alternate – go to B.

B. Leaves round with petiole (leaf stalk) from the center of the leaf (peltate); plant smooth, fleshy; when present, white flowers in clusters on stalks.

Seaside Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle bonariensis* Lamark).

B. Leaves not peltate – go to C.

C. Leaves compound with three leaflets (trifoliate); seeds in slender bean pods; when present, flowers rose to purple.

Beach Pea (*Strophostyles helvola* [L.] Ell.).

C. Leaves simple – single blade only – go to D.

D. Tip of leaf rounded or pointed, leaf oval and widest near base (ovate); at least some petioles 1/2 or more length of leaf blade; upper leaf surface smooth, but rest of plant covered with dense scales, giving the entire erect shrub-like plant a brownish-gray appearance.

Silver-leaf Croton (*Croton punctatus* Jacquin).

D. Tip of leaf notched (emarginated) – go to E.

E. Leaves un-lobed, thick & fleshy, ovate to ovate-spatulate (spoon shaped), slightly emerginate, clustered at the tips of mostly prostrate stems.; when present flowers in axillary fascicles (bundles at juncture of leaf and plant stem).

Seabeach Amaranth (*Amaranthus pumilus* Rafinesque).

E. Leaves lobed and with texture of leather – go to F.

F. Leaves with two rounded lobes (like a goat's footprint); when present flowers trumpet shaped, pink to light purple with dark throat. **Railroad Vine** (*Ipomoea pes-caprae* [L.] R.Br.).

F. Leaves oblong or fiddle-shaped with 2 to 4 lobes at base; when present, flowers trumpet shaped and white throughout.

Beach Morning-glory (*Ipomoea stolonifera* [Cyrillo] Poirét).

About the Beach Vitex Project

Beach vitex (*Vitex rotundifolia*) is a woody shrub native to Korea and other countries in the western Pacific that was introduced onto Carolina beaches in the mid 1980s. The plant is now spreading rapidly, replacing native dune building species of plants like sea oats and seaside panicum. This exotic vine-like plant does not appear to trap wind blown sand as efficiently as do those native species, further jeopardizing our beaches. This loss of critical natural habitat poses a direct threat to animals that depend upon the dunes. Sea turtle volunteers have documented sea turtles returning to the sea without laying their eggs when they encounter beach vitex covered dunes. Although not yet officially listed by the state of South Carolina as a Noxious Weed, beach vitex is causing major concern along the Carolina coast. The South Carolina Exotic Pest Plant Council has helped establish the **SC Beach Vitex Task Force** and is leading an interagency effort to address the issue.

What can you do to help?

The potential for beach vitex to crowd out native dune plants and impede sea turtle nesting is increasing. If you see this plant anywhere in your beach community, particularly on the dunes or beach, record its location by a street address, near-by landmarks, or with a GPS unit and report that information to:

Betsy Brabson, SC Beach Vitex Task Force Coordinator,
(843) 546-9531 or wbrabson@sccoast.net.

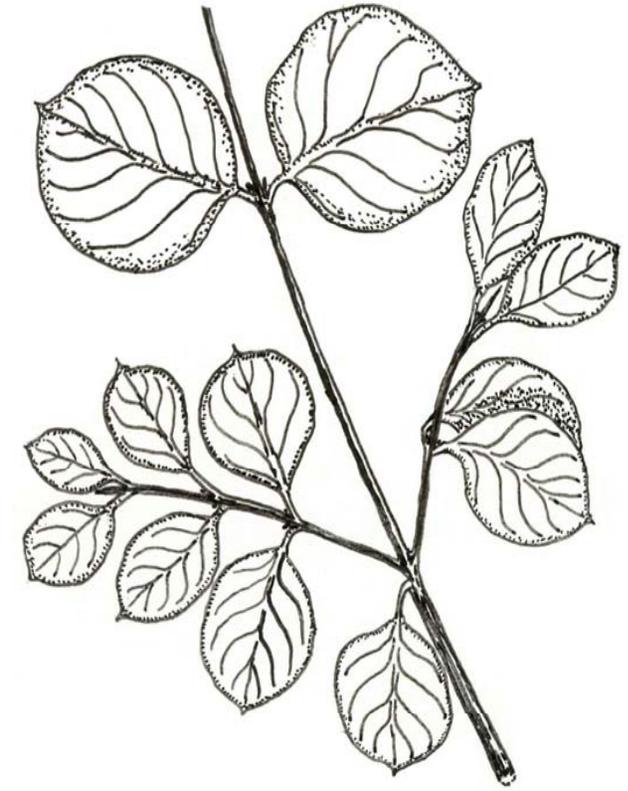
At this time, it is important that you do not remove the plant. Scientists and volunteers are working hard to record and monitor the location of the plant in order to determine how widespread the problem is and how fast beach vitex is spreading.

For additional information and updates, please visit the SC Beach Vitex Task Force Website at:

<http://www.beachvitex.org>



Identifying Beach Vitex: *Vitex rotundifolia*



Vitex rotundifolia L. 1X

Beach Vitex - Silvery gray green leaves, opposite, round, widest near center, with minute point at tip (mucronulate). Vine-like growth. Very fragrant when crushed. When present, showy terminal clusters of 1 inch bluish-purple flowers. Produces lots of 1/4 inch round fruit, purplish-black when ripe.

Drawings and key by Robert Schuhmacher