

## A Tale of Two Scaevolias

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The Florida Keys landscape is planted with two *Scaevola* species: Inkberry, *Scaevola plumieri* and Beach Naupaka, *Scaevola sericea*. Inkberry is listed as a threatened native Florida Keys plant species by the State of Florida. Beach Naupaka is an introduced Florida Keys landscape plant that originates from East Africa to the Pacific Islands that has overtaken native plant habitat.

Inkberry is a 2- to 3-foot tall shrub with succulent stems that spread to form dense clumps. The foliage is clustered toward the tips of the branches and is thick, fleshy, and a glossy, medium green color. The insignificant half flowers are 3/4 to 1 inch in length, five to six lobed, and found in small clusters among the foliage. The fruits are black, glossy, smooth, and fairly prominent among the foliage. Inkberry provides food and cover for wildlife.

Inkberry can be used as a seaside ornamental, specimen, or ground cover. They grow nearly to the high tide mark on the oceanside 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, grows in alkaline and sandy soils, and requires full sun. Plantings inland should be located in a well-drained landscape setting.

Beach Naupaka grows into a rounded to spreading shrub is a fast grower that is commonly 3 to 10 feet tall with an equal spread. They form a rounded clump where they have been planted along the beaches of South Florida. It has fleshy, bright green leaves that are densely clustered at the tips of the branches. The inconspicuous fragrant white half-moon flowers are borne in clusters of 5 to 9 and occur throughout the year. The fruits are white, pithy berries that are eaten by pigeons and seabirds, and then dispersed to new locations.

Beach Naupaka is displacing rare native Florida Keys beach plants, such as Inkberry and Sea Lavender because it is widely sold and used as screen or hedge and as a tall ground cover along the beach. Beach Napuka will adapt to any soil and responds to irrigation and occasional fertilization with rapid growth. However, it also thrives on neglect. This shrub flourishes with high levels of sunshine and ocean spray, and it will grow well on marl land or on beach dunes.

When planting your landscape, learn more about Florida Keys native plants that are adapted to your zip code by visiting "Natives for your

Neighborhood” at the Regional Conservation Web site at [www.regionalconservation.org](http://www.regionalconservation.org). Ask for and purchase native plants at your local plant nurseries.