



Scaevola, the Good or the Bad?

(Author's Note: This is the eighteenth in a series of articles by members of the City of Sanibel Vegetation Committee dealing with vegetative matters of concern to island residents. Members of the Vegetation Committee are Sanibel residents appointed by City Council for one-year terms. To be considered for appointment, contact the City Manager's Office at (239) 472-3700.)

Our native inkberry, *Scaevola plumieri*, is an erect to trailing, herbaceous evergreen shrub which can grow to four feet in height. These plants often form dense clumps, and the alternate, glossy green, thick leaves cluster near the branch tips.

Inkberry prefers a dry, sandy habitat and is an ideal plant for the beach zone as it is salt and drought tolerant. The trailing succulent stems help to trap sand and acting as a beach stabilizer. Although, this plant is most often found near the beach, it will grow in a variety of soils. Inkberry tolerates full sun, flowers most of the year, and its dense growth provides excellent shelter for birds and mammals.

The small, fan-like, whitish colored flowers with a yellow throat grow in clusters among the terminal leaves, followed by glossy black fruits eaten by birds.



Pictured above is the native inkberry, *Scaevola plumieri*, the “good”.

Photo credit: Biodiversity Explorer and USDA Plants.

Planting this low maintenance native inkberry is definitely preferred to using the exotic inkberry, *Scaevola taccada*! The Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council has put it in the Category 1 list of pest plants, and it is one the eight regulated invasive, exotic plants threatening Sanibel's natural areas. The non-native inkberry can spread extensively, displacing native plants. They are required to be removed from properties to be developed and may not be grown or propagated on Sanibel.



Pictured above is the non-native inkberry, *Scaevola taccada*, the “bad”.

Photo credit: Lauren Gutierrez and Atlas of Florida Plants.

The non-native inkberry could cause an invasion in your yard! It is a weedy, fleshy variety, forming dense mounds of shiny green leaves. The white half-flower is followed by a white berry. If planted along the beach, the fruits and seeds may float, which can cause the coastal spread of this salt tolerant species. When removing non-native inkberry, small plants may be hand pulled while plants that are cut should be treated with the appropriate herbicide to prevent re-growth.

An interesting note about our native inkberry is that it has been credited with honoring Charles Plumier, a 17th century monk who explored and wrote about plants of the Americas. A sure talking point when you are showing off your native garden!

To view pictures of the non-native inkberry or the City’s “The Alien Invasion” brochure, visit the City’s website at <http://www.mysanibel.com/Departments/Natural-Resources/Vegetation-Information/Exotic-Vegetation/Other-Invasive-Exotic-Vegetation> or contact the City’s Natural Resources Department at 472-3700.

To read other Vegetation Committee articles in this series please visit the City of Sanibel’s <http://www.mysanibel.com/Departments/Natural-Resources> Natural Resources Department website: