



# Beach naupaka or Beach cabbage

## Taxonomy

Order: Asterales

Family: Goodeniaceae

Species: *Scaevola taccada* (Gaertn.) Roxb.

Synonyms: *Scaevola frutescens*, *Scaevola lobelia*,  
*Scaevola sericea*, *Scaevola koenigii*

## Summary

Beach naupaka is a spreading shrub that forms dense rounded mounds from 1 to 3.5 m tall. It is native to tropical and subtropical coasts along the Indian Ocean, in China, SE Asia, and in the Pacific Islands. It has been introduced to Florida and the Caribbean (Bermuda, the Bahamas and some islands of the West Indies) where it has become an invasive agricultural and environmental weed. It has many common names.



Beach naupaka (shrubs in the foreground) in the Seychelles © Hansueli Krapf

## Biology

Plants can produce fruits within their first or second year and produce flowers and fruits year-round. Fruits float in sea water and mature seeds remain viable after long periods of exposure to sea water. It grows easily from cuttings or seed. It commonly grows in sand dune, marine/estuarine, tidal marsh, saline shores, seagrape, maritime forest, mangrove, coastal strand, coastal berm, coastal rock barrens and coastal uplands.

## Distribution in Caribbean

Common throughout the Caribbean region, including Anguilla and TCI in disturbed and natural habitats.

## Pathway of Entry

Natural dispersal: fruits are adapted to be dispersed by ocean currents and may float for up to a year. Plant fragments and stems may be dispersed on vegetation rafts.

Intentional dispersal: introduced as a salt-tolerant ornamental on many West Indian islands. Dispersed widely in plant trade.

## Impact

It colonises sand dunes and outcompetes native coastal vegetation. It negatively impacts various critically endangered and vulnerable species.



## Further Information:

<https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/48817>

<http://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/speciesname/Scaevola+sericea>



*Scaevola taccada* young plant © Forest & Kim Starr



*Scaevola taccada* fruit, note the persistent calyx lobes © Pancrat CC BY-SA 3.0



*Scaevola taccada* flowers © David Eickhoff



*Scaevola plumerieri* fruit © Marcia Stefani

### Field Description

*Scaevola taccada* is a dense, multi-stemmed, spreading shrub that forms rounded mounds from 1 to 3.5 meters tall. It produces medium green elliptic leaves which are alternate, waxy and fleshy or succulent. They grow from 4 to 21 cm long and 1.8 to 9 cm wide and have a broader tip than base. Often the edges of the leaves roll under. Two varieties are cultivated: var. *sericea* has silky plant hairs on the stem and leaves; *S. var. taccada* has smooth leaves, lacking plant hairs. The flowers are white or cream-colored and clustered. Flowers emerge in groups of three, with all flowers stalked. They are sometimes blushed with pink, purple or violet and have a pleasant fragrance. They have an irregular shape with five petals (about 2 cm long) - all on one side of the flower like a semi-circle making them appear to have been torn in half. The flowers grow in small clusters from between the leaves at the ends of the stems.

The fruit are round to elliptical drupes, measuring about 1 to 1.7 cm wide, and are coloured white to yellowish-white. The fleshy berries contain beige corky ridged seeds. The inside of the fruit is corky, and the fruits are buoyant.

### Similar Species

*Scaevola taccada* is similar to the related *Scaevola plumeri* – both were included in the original description of the species. *Scaevola taccada* has evident calyx lobes and white fruit on which the calyx lobes persist, whereas *S. plumeri* has short or absent lobes on its calyx and black fruit when ripe.