



Beach Naupaka

Scaevola sericea Vahl.

(synonyms: *S. frutescens* (Mill.) Krause, *S. plumerioides* Nutt., *S. taccada* (Gaertn.) Roxb.)

Common names: beach naupaka, naupaka kahakai, aupaka, huahekili, naupaka kai

Native habitat: Tropical Asia and Pacific islands, including islands of Hawaii

Characteristics

Beach naupaka is a many-branched, dense, evergreen, spreading or mounding shrub that branches from the base. Its height and form are variable. No selections have been made. It usually grows to about 3 ft tall, but it can get up to 10 ft tall. It spreads from 6 to 15 ft wide.

Beach naupaka leaves are rounded, 3–5 inches long, and notched at the tip and are bright green, succulent, downy, and alternate in arrangement. The leaf blade narrows into a short stem. Landscape texture is medium to coarse. The bark is smooth and light gray.

The fragrant, white flowers are about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long and streaked with purple. The flower appears to be split in half. Flowers are borne in clusters of five to nine in the leaf axils. The floral display is somewhat effective in landscapes. White berries follow the flowers. The berries are two-celled and contain beige, corky, ridged seeds.

Location

Beach naupaka is one of the most common beach plants in Hawaii. It requires full sun and grows well under a wide range of soil conditions, including sandy, high-pH, and clay soils. Naupaka has excellent salt, wind, and (once established) drought tolerance. It tolerates salt spray.

Landscape uses

A popular landscape plant in Hawaii, particularly for beach areas, naupaka is commonly used for mass planting but can also serve as a specimen. It is suitable for



xeriscapes. It can be pruned to a hedge and can also be used as a screen or windbreak. Naupaka makes a good groundcover and will help control erosion. It provides an excellent salt buffer for more sensitive plants. It also does well in containers.

Culture

Naupaka is a relatively low-maintenance landscape plant. Periodic pruning may be required to keep the plant in bounds. The need for irrigation is light to moderate, once the plant is established. Naupaka is relatively pest-free.

Propagation

The seeds germinate readily. They remain viable in sea water for a long time and germinate faster after a salt-water soak. Cuttings, even fairly large ones, root easily. It can also be air-layered.

Additional notes

The leaves are used for de-fogging face masks and goggles before skin diving. Leaves have been used medicinally and eaten cooked as greens. The durable wood has been used for articles such as pegs for shipbuilding. The pith has been used for making Malayan rice paper.

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*Replaces Instant Information/Ornamentals and Flowers Series no. 14.