

## The Common Dune Plants

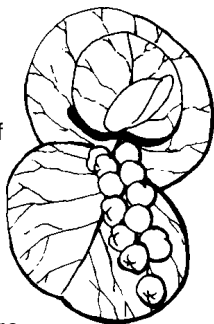


### Sea Oat

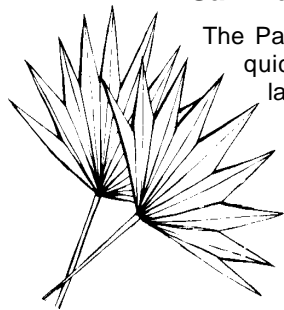
Sea Oats (*Uniola paniculate*) play a major role in the stabilization of the coastal strand. The long roots hold the sand in place and help prevent wind and water erosion. The picking of Sea Oats is prohibited by park regulations and Florida law.

### Seagrape

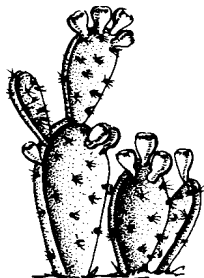
The large rounded leaves of the Seagrape (*Coccolobia uvifera*) are green with a bright red midrib. The ripened fruit of this coastal scrub is edible and makes delicious jelly. During the fall raccoons frequently visit the dunes to feed on the Seagrapes. This tropical species does not naturally occur north of the seashore boundaries.



### Saw Palmetto



The Palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) is quickly identified by its many large fan-shaped leaves. The inflorescence of white fragrant flowers make it an important plant in honey production. A variety of snakes, some poisonous, hunt the small rodents living in the Palmetto thickets.



### Prickly Pear Cactus

Several species of the Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia*) grow in the sandy soil along the coast. All have yellow blossoms which soon give way to the edible red fruit.

### Beach Berry

The Beach Berry (*Scaevola plumieri*) blooms almost continuously. The inch-long white flowers are slit on the upper side, and give it another common name Half-flower. The mature, black juicy berries provide a year-round food source for wildlife.



### Yucca



The sharp-pointed, bayonet-like leaves of the Yucca give it the common name of Spanish Bayonet (*Yucca aloifolia*). The creamy-white blossoms are pollinated only by the tiny Yucca Moth. The moth lays its eggs in the Yucca flowers, where the larvae feed on the developing seeds. The larvae mature and soon drop to the ground and pupate. When the Yucca blooms the next spring, the adult moth emerges to begin the cycle again.

### Beach Sunflower

The Beach Sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*) and the Sea Ox-eye (*Berrichia frutescens*) are two of the more common wildflowers found along the coastal strand. Both are members of the Composite family. The leaves of the low growing Beach Sunflower are dark green and the flower is yellow with a brown center. The grayish-leaved Sea Ox-eye stands taller and displays a solid yellow flower at the end of each branch.



## Canaveral National Seashore

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# Hills of Sand

## The First Defense



# Canaveral

National Seashore  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

## The Wilderness Dune

Canaveral National Seashore protects 24 miles of undeveloped barrier beach and dune. This is the longest stretch of undeveloped dune along the east coast of Florida. At Canaveral you can see what the beach looked like when the Spaniards first arrived in Florida almost 500 years ago. You can walk along some stretches of the beach and have a wilderness experience free from the intrusion of other people.

## The Defensive Dune

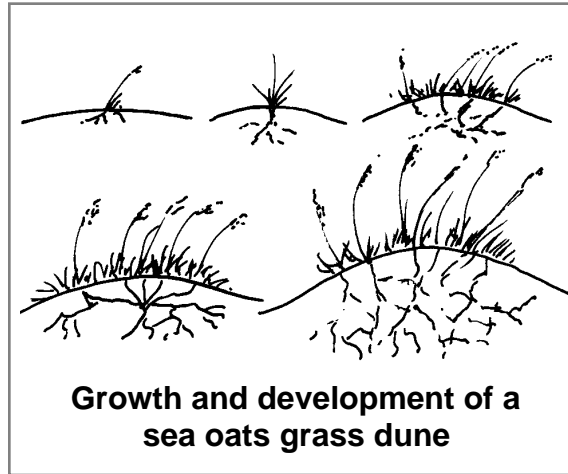
The dune is the backbone of the barrier island. Barrier islands are so named because they provide a barrier between the Atlantic Ocean and the mainland. At times the potential fury of the ocean breaks loose and the shoreline is lashed by northeastern storms of hurricanes. In the case of an average hurricane, a storm surge of 10 to 13 feet above normal tide level can be forced ashore. Canaveral's 20 foot high dunes are a barrier, a dike, that prevents the flooding of inland areas. A healthy, growing dune system is inexpensive flood insurance for communities like Titusville, Oak Hill, Edgewater and New Smyrna Beach.

## The Dune Builders

From the crest of the dune down to the beach is a zone of unique plants named sea oats. Sea oats, unlike other dune plants, can better tolerate wind driven salt spray and sand. In fact, the growth

of this hardy grass is stimulated as it is gradually buried by sand.

Wind-driven sand strikes the grass blades and drops. The sand gradually accumulates, reshaping and expanding the dune. Sea oats are responsible for the piling up of the sand and the gradual growth of the dune.



## The Dune Protectors

Crouching on the lee side of the dune are a variety of dune plants whose tolerance to salt spray is much less than that of sea oats.

The roots of these plants probe deep for fresh water that can accumulate in small amounts

beneath the dune. These roots entwine about the grains of sand, bonding them together. The stabilizing function of the roots accounts for the ability of the dune to withstand strong wind and waves.

## The Dune Dwellers

Without the shade and fruits provided by the dune plants wildlife would find the dune and beach environment intolerable places to live.

The dune and its plants are home for the threatened Eastern indigo snake and gopher tortoise. Rodents and insects are abundant and attract predators such as snakes, spotted skunk, armadillo and many species of birds. Bobcat with young are often found in the dunes.

## How You Can Protect the Dune

Use the boardwalks to walk to and from the beach. Foot traffic kills the fragile dune plants. This begins the erosion process.

Even though the winter wind may be cold, do not seek shelter in the dune vegetation.

Take your trash out with you. Properly dispose of items like plastic bags and fishing line, which can injure wildlife.

