

Coralbean

(*Erythrina herbacea*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Coralbean gets a common name from its coral-colored seeds. It is also known as Cardinal spear, which refers to its red tubular flowers. It is a semi-deciduous to evergreen woody shrub found in coastal hammocks, sandhills, flatwoods, mesic and upland woods, and pine rocklands throughout Florida. Its striking scarlet flowers attract hummingbirds, bumble bees and butterflies.

Coralbean's flowers are born in long (4–6+ inches) terminal racemes. Individual flowers may be as long as 3 inches. Leaves are compound and composed of three light green, deltoid-shaped leaflets, each with tiny prickles along the underside of its margin. The stem and irregular branches are also armed with short curved spines. Bark is light gray to whitish and may be rough or smooth. Fruits are large, light drooping pods that turn nearly black and split open when mature. Seeds are shiny and bright red with a black spot or stripe.

Family: Fabaceae (Legume or pea family)

Native range: Nearly throughout

To see where natural populations of Coralbean have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: Zones 8A–11

Soil: Dry, sandy or calcareous soil

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade

Growth habit: 3–8' tall, but has been known to grow as tall as 20'

Propagation: Seed, cuttings

Garden tips: Coralbean is an incredibly versatile plant. Left alone and in the right conditions, it can grow to the size of a small tree. Trimmed back, it works well as a border or mass planting and in container or above-ground planters. It is drought and salt tolerant and pest resistant, making it the perfect addition to your Florida landscape. It is very showy when it blooms.

Caution: This plant contains toxic alkaloids that may result in paralysis if ingested. Keep it away from pets and small children. Gloves are recommended when working with seeds.

Plants are often available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery on your area.



Photo by Stacey Matrazzo



Coralbean's deltoid-shaped leaves. Photo by Stacey Matrazzo