

Railroad vine

(*Ipomoea pes-caprae* subsp. *brasiliensis*)

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

Also known as beach morning glory, bayhops, or goat's foot, railroad vine is a fast-growing, evergreen, perennial commonly found on beach dunes. Flowers are large, funnel-shaped and purple to purplish-pink in color. Its large nectaries and showy flowers attract bees, butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, wasps and ants. Leaves are succulent and rounded, with a notched tip resembling a cloven hoof, hence its species name, *pes caprae*, which means "goat's foot" in Latin. Leaves and stems contain a white sap that may help protect it from pests. It has also been used to treat jellyfish stings.

As with other morning glory species, railroad vine flowers open in the morning and last only one day, however, the plant is a prolific bloomer.

Railroad vine occurs naturally in most of the coastal peninsular counties, and in a few coastal panhandle counties. It is a pioneer species and is often used in beach restoration and stabilization.

Family: Convolvulaceae (Morning glory family)

Native range: Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Gulf, Franklin, Highlands and most coastal peninsula counties, as well as the Keys

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

Hardiness: Zones 8–11

Soil: Does best in dry, nutrient-poor, sandy soils, but can also tolerate moist or calcareous soils

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: 6–16" tall; vine length varies from 10–20', but can extend as long as 100'

Propagation: Seed, cutting

Garden tips: Railroad vine is highly tolerant of salt, heat, and wind. It can be difficult to cultivate in a typical landscape. It does best on beach dunes.

Railroad vine is sometimes available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery in your area.



Photo by Stacey Matrazzo