

Coralbean

(*Erythrina herbacea*)

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

Coralbean gets its common name from its coral-colored seeds. It is also known as Cardinal spear, which refers to its red tubular flowers. It is a 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.



Photo by Emily Bell

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.

The genus name *Erythrina* is from the Greek *erythrós*, meaning “red.”

Family: Fabaceae (Legume or pea family)

Native range: Nearly throughout Florida

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

Lifespan: Perennial

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' in South Florida

Propagation: Scarify seeds by nipping the seed coat before planting in spring

Florida regions of landscape suitability: North, Central, South

Garden tips: Coralbean is an incredibly versatile plant. It is drought tolerant, salt tolerant and pest resistant, making it the perfect addition to many Florida landscapes. 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.

Coralbean is available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a nursery in your area.

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