

# Gopher apple

(*Geobalanus oblongifolius*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms).

Gopher apple is a hardy, low-growing, woody groundcover that occurs naturally in sandhills, pine and scrubby flatwoods, scrub, coastal dunes and pine rocklands. It typically blooms spring through summer but may bloom year-round, attracting a plethora of pollinators. Its fruits appear in late summer. They are edible to humans (although nearly tasteless) and other animals but it is a preferred food of gopher tortoises. The plant is often confused with Runner oak (*Quercus pumila*), which has a similar growth habit and is found in similar habitats.



Photo by Emily Bell

Gopher apple's flowers are small, creamy white and born in erect, terminal cymes. Leaves are leathery, stiff and oblong with fine but obvious venation. They can grow up to 4 inches long and are alternately arranged. Fruits are white drupes with a rosy blush, ovoid to ellipsoid in shape, and about 1 inch long or longer.

This species was previously assigned the botanical name *Licania michauxii* and may still be referred to as such in some online resources. However, research published in 2016 determined that it was better placed in the genus *Geobalanus*.

**Family:** Chrysobalanaceae (Cocoplum family)

**Native range:** Nearly throughout Florida

*To see where natural populations of Gopher apple have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).*

**Lifespan:** Perennial

**Soil:** Dry, well-drained sandy soils

**Exposure:** Full sun

**Growth habit:** Up to 1' tall

**Propagation:** Seed

**Florida regions of landscape suitability:** North, Central, South

**Garden tips:** Gopher apple will spread and form colonies by way of underground rhizomes. It works well as a groundcover and can help stabilize dry, sandy soils. It is fire adapted and salt and drought tolerant.

Gopher apple is often available at nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit [www.PlantRealFlorida.org](http://www.PlantRealFlorida.org) to find a nursery in your area.



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