

Railroad vine

(*Ipomoea pes-caprae*)

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. It occurs naturally in most of Florida's coastal peninsular counties, and in a few coastal panhandle counties. It is a pioneer species and is often used in beach restoration and stabilization.



Photo by Emily Bell

Railroad vine 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.

The 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.

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.

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Does best in dry, nutrient-poor, sandy soils

Exposure: Full sun

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

Propagation: Seed, cuttings

Florida regions of landscape suitability: North, Central, South

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 www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a nursery in your area.

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