

Coastal doghobble

(*Leucothoe axillaris*)

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

Coastal doghobble is an evergreen shrub found in swamps, wet hammocks and flatwoods, and along stream edges. Its profusion of spring-blooming flowers is pollinated primarily by bees.

Flowers are white to pinkish-white, waxy and urn- or bell-shaped. They are born in drooping, axillary racemes. Calyces are five-lobed. The leaves are simple, leathery and elliptic to lanceolate with pubescent petioles. The upper surfaces are dark green; undersides are lighter in color. Margins may be entire or have irregular serration. Leaf arrangement is alternate. Branches are loose and generally arching. The fruit is a round, dark brown capsule.



Photo by Ryan Fessenden

The genus name *Leucothoe* is from the Greek *leukós*, or “white,” and alludes to the bloom color. The species epithet *axillaris* is from the Latin *axilla*, or “armpit,” and references how the flowers are born in the leaf axils. According to legend, the common name “doghobble” originated with hunters whose dogs would become tangled in the plant’s branches while chasing quarry.

Family: Ericaceae (Heath family)

Native range: Panhandle, some North and Central Florida counties

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

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moderately moist to wet acidic soils

Exposure: Partial to full shade

Growth habit: 2-4' tall and spreading

Propagation: Cuttings, seed

Florida regions of landscape suitability: North, Central

Garden tips: Coastal doghobble is best suited for moist, shady landscapes where little else will grow, but requires good air circulation to prevent leaf spot diseases. It works well as a foundation plant in a north-facing spot and does especially well near a watercourse. Although the plant prefers shade, it will tolerate some sunlight. Its interesting dark evergreen foliage and showy flowers keep it attractive throughout the year.

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

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PLANT PROFILE:

