

Introduction.

Beach vitex (*Vitex rotundifolia*) is a deciduous woody vine from the Pacific Rim, that was introduced to the Southeastern United States in the mid-1980’s, for use as an ornamental and for beach stabilization. By the mid-1990’s, dune restoration specialists with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began to notice beach vitex spreading from original plantings on South Carolina beaches, crowding out native dune plants, spreading along beaches by seeds and vegetative fragments.

Description.

Beach vitex **leaves** are round, silvery gray-green, 1-2 inches long, and have a spicy fragrance. The **flowers** are purplish-blue, 1 inch in width, and produced in small clusters at the ends of branches. The round **fruits** are 1/4 inch in diameter and purplish-black when ripe. The plant typically grows up to 12 feet or more in diameter, and can produce rooting runners up to 60 feet long.



Task Force Objectives.

In the fall of 2003, a task force, comprised of local, state, and federal agencies and organizations was formed to address beach vitex on the South Carolina coast. In 2005, the Carolinas Beach Vitex Task Force was established to coordinate efforts to address the plant in both North and South Carolina. Major objectives of the task force include:

- **Early Detection:** Detection and reporting of beach vitex populations on the Carolinas coast;
- **Prevention:** Removal of seedlings from public areas to prevent further spread of the plant;
- **Rapid Assessment:** An ecological assessment to determine the impact of the invader on native plants and animals; and to determine if the plant should be regulated by state and federal agencies.
- **Rapid Response:** Development of environmentally sound methods for removal of large plantings.
- **Restoration:** Development of methods for restoration with native plants once beach vitex is removed.

How Can You Help?

Beach property owners, residents, and others, can greatly assist in the effort to prevent the establishment and introduction and spread of beach vitex and other invasive plants on the Carolina Coast. Here’s how.

1. Volunteer to detect and remove beach vitex seedlings from public beach areas.
2. Report the location of beach vitex populations to the Task Force Coordinators using the online reporting form on the Task Force website at www.beachvitex.org, and send digital photographs when possible. *Do not attempt to remove the plant until it has been positively identified.*
3. Assist property owners in replacing beach vitex with native dune plants approved by the South Carolina Office of Coastal Resource Management and the North Carolina Coastal Resources Commission.
4. Use native or non-invasive introduced plants in all landscaping projects.
5. Report suspected new invasive plants to local and state officials.
6. Help raise awareness and understanding of the invasive species problem – *Beach vitex is one of many introduced invasive plants in the United States.*

C O N T A C T I N F O R M A T I O N

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| 1. U.S. Geological Survey, Whiteville, NC; | Phone: 910-648-6762; | E-Mail: rwestbrooks@usgs.gov |
| 2. Task Force - SC Coordinator, Georgetown, SC; | Phone: 843-546-9531; | E-Mail: wbrabson@sccoast.net |
| 3. Task Force - NC Coordinator, Kure Beach, NC; | Phone: 910-458-8257 | E-Mail: melanie.doyle@ncmail.net |