



Salt-Tolerant Plants for Florida ¹

R. J. Black ²

Introduction

If you think that the state of Florida offers a wealth of plant material and good growing environment, you're right. But try gardening near or on the Atlantic and the Gulf coasts, and you may have problems. Winds carry salt spray inland, leaving salt deposits on plants. Salt causes water to move out of the plants in a process called exosmosis. Especially on young leaves, this often results in the marginal burning and loss of leaves in non-salt-tolerant plants. Plant damage may also result from driving rains and frequently heavy surf.

Coastal soil composition adds to gardening problems. Sand along the coast generally lacks organic matter or any other nutrient- and moisture-holding material, although this lack can be partly overcome by the addition of organic matter. Also, alkaline soils may lock up vital mineral nutrients needed for plant growth.

Salt tolerance of a plant relates to resistance and ability to grow under conditions of (1) high winds, (2) salt spray, (3) alkaline soils, and (4) infertile, sandy soils. The tolerance of a given plant to salt may be affected if any of the four conditions become extreme.

The tables included here provide a guide to selecting landscape plants for Florida's beach areas or areas with high levels of water salinity. In each table, plants are listed by common and Latin name and are divided into categories such as trees and shrubs. Within each category plants are grouped according to degree of salt tolerance. The range in Florida is indicated by: **N** = North, **C** = Central, **S** = South.

Salt-Tolerant plants are highly resistant to salt drift and can be used in exposed environments.

Moderately Salt-Tolerant plants tolerate some salt spray but grow best when protected by buildings, fences, or plantings of more salt-tolerant species.

Slightly Salt-Tolerant plants have poor tolerance and should be always used well back of exposed areas and be protected by buildings, fences, or plantings of more salt-tolerant species.

Many common plants are listed, although numerous less common plants are not included. Extremely salt-sensitive plants have been excluded. Information is given on the range of growth in Florida and approximate plant height at maturity.

1. This document is ENH-26 (which supersedes OH-26), one of a series of the Department of Environmental Horticulture, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Date first printed: December 1985. Reviewed: June 1997, September 2003. Please visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>

2. R. J. Black, Extension Consumer Horticulturist, Extension Environmental Horticulturist; Department of Environmental Horticulture, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

- **Table 1 .** Salt-Tolerant Trees for Florida
- **Table 2 .** Salt-Tolerant Palms for Florida
- **Table 3 .** Salt-Tolerant Shrubs for Florida
- **Table 4 .** Salt-Tolerant Ground Covers for Florida
- **Table 5 .** Salt-Tolerant Vines for Florida

NOTE: Scientific plant names in the tables are correct according to the source *Hortus Third, A Concise Dictionary of Plants Cultivated in the United States and Canada*, revised and expanded by the Staff of the Liberty Hyde Bailey Hortorium, New York State University at Cornell University. Macmillian Publishing Co., Inc., 1976.

Table 1. Salt-Tolerant Trees for Florida

Common Name	Scientific Name	Range in Florida	Approximate Height
Salt-Tolerant Plants			
Black olive	<i>Bucida buceras</i>	S	40 feet
Bontia	<i>Bontia daphnoide</i>	S	30 feet
Frangipani	<i>Plumeria</i> spp.	S	15 feet
Geiger tree	<i>Cordia sebestena</i>	S	30 feet
Japanese pagoda-tree	<i>Sophora japonica</i>	S	60 feet
Live oak	<i>Quercus virginiana</i>	N,C,S	60 feet
Mahogany	<i>Swietenia mahogani</i>	S	40 feet
Ochrosia	<i>Ochrosia elliptica</i>	S	20 feet
Pigeon plum	<i>Coccoloba laurifolia</i>	S	70 feet
Satin leaf	<i>Chrysophyllum oliviforme</i>	S	30 feet
Silver button-bush	<i>Conocarpus erectus</i>	S	60 feet
Tabebuia	<i>Tabebuia argentea</i>	C,S	Variable
Moderately Salt-Tolerant Plants			
Weeping fig	<i>Ficus benjamina</i>	S	50 feet
Chaste-tree	<i>Vitex agnus-castus</i>	N,C,S	20 feet
Dahoon	<i>Ilex cassine</i>	N,C,S	40 feet
Gumbo-limbo	<i>Bursera simaruba</i>	S	60 feet
Loquat	<i>Eriobotrya japonica</i>	N,C,S	20 feet
Magnolia	<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	N,C	75 feet
Mango	<i>Mangifera indica</i>	S	40 feet
Pongam	<i>Pongamia pinnata</i>	S	40 feet
Royal poinciana	<i>Delonix regia</i>	S	40 feet
Rubber plant	<i>Ficus elastica</i>	S	50 feet

Table 1. Salt-Tolerant Trees for Florida

Common Name	Scientific Name	Range in Florida	Approximate Height
Sweet acacia	<i>Acacia farnesiana</i>	N,C,S	10 feet
Slightly Salt-Tolerant Plants			
African tulip tree	<i>Spathodea campanulata</i>	S	50 feet
American holly	<i>Ilex opaca</i>	N,C	50 feet
Coral tree	<i>Erythrina</i> spp.	C,S	25 feet
Golden-shower	<i>Cassia fistula</i>	S	40 feet
Jerusalem thorn	<i>Parkinsonia aculeata</i>	N,C,S	25 feet
Pencil tree	<i>Euphorbia tirucalli</i>	S	20 feet
Sweet gum	<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	N,C,S	100 feet
Yellow poinciana	<i>Peltophorum pterocarpum</i>	C,S	50 feet

Table 2. Salt-Tolerant Palms for Florida

Common Name	Scientific Name	Range in Florida	Approximate Height
Salt-Tolerant Plants			
Bottle palm (LY) ¹	<i>Hyophorbe</i> spp.	S	15 feet
Brittle thatch palm	<i>Thrinax morrisii</i>	S	15 feet
Cabbage palm	<i>Sabal palmetto</i>	N,C,S	60 feet
Coconut (LY)	<i>Cocos nucifera</i>	S	80 feet
Hurricane palm (LY)	<i>Dictyosperma album</i>	S	40 feet
Saw palmetto	<i>Serenoa repens</i>	N,C,S	10 feet
Silver palm	<i>Coccothrinax argentata</i>	S	20 feet
Washingtonia palm	<i>Washingtonia</i> spp.	N,C,S	80 feet
Moderately Salt-Tolerant Plants			
Acrocomia	<i>Gastrococos crispera</i>	C,S	40 feet

Table 2. Salt-Tolerant Palms for Florida

Common Name	Scientific Name	Range in Florida	Approximate Height
African oil palm	<i>Elaeis guineensis</i>	S	60 feet
Areca palm	<i>Chrysalidocarpus lutescens</i>	S	30 feet
Canary island date palm (LY)	<i>Phoenix canariensis</i>	N,C,S	30 feet
Christmas palm (LY)	<i>Veitchia merrillii</i>	S	20 feet
Date palm (LY)	<i>Phoenix dactylifera</i>	C,S	50 feet
European fan	<i>Chamaerops humilis</i>	N,C,S	10 feet
Fiji island fan palm (LY)	<i>Pritchardia pacifica</i>	S	30 feet
Gingerbread palm	<i>Hyphaene thebaica</i>	S	25 feet
Lady palm	<i>Rhapis excelsa</i>	N,C,S	15 feet
Paurotis	<i>Acoelorrhaphe wrightii</i>	S	40 feet
Pindo palm	<i>Butia capitata</i>	N,C,S	30 feet
Queen palm	<i>Arecastrum romanzoffianum</i>	C,S	40 feet
Royal palm	<i>Roystonea elata</i>	S	80 feet
Windmill palm (LY)	<i>Trachycarpus fortunei</i>	N,C,S	20 feet
1 LY--Palms on quarantine list displaying symptoms of lethal yellowing			

Table 3. Salt-Tolerant Shrubs for Florida

Common Name	Scientific Name	Range in Florida	Approximate Height
Salt-Tolerant Plants			
Adam's-needle	<i>Yucca smalliana</i>	N,C,S	4 feet
African milk brush	<i>Synadenium grantii</i>	S	8 feet
Bay cedar	<i>Suriana maritima</i>	S	20 feet
Crown-of-thorns	<i>Euphorbia milii</i>	C,S	3 feet
Inkberry	<i>Scaevola plumieri</i>	S	6 feet

Table 3. Salt-Tolerant Shrubs for Florida

Common Name	Scientific Name	Range in Florida	Approximate Height
Marlberry	<i>Ardisia escallonioides</i>	S	20 feet
Milkstripe euphorbia	<i>Euphorbia lactea</i>	S	15 feet
Natal plum	<i>Carissa grandiflora</i>	C,S	10 feet
Oleander	<i>Nerium oleander</i>	N,C,S	20 feet
Pittosporum	<i>Pittosporum tobira</i>	N,C,S	15 feet
Sea grape	<i>Coccoloba uvifera</i>	S	25 feet
Southern wax myrtle	<i>Myrica cerifera</i>	N,C,S	25 feet
Yaupon	<i>Ilex vomitoria</i>	N,C	25 feet
Moderately Salt-Tolerant Plants			
Barbados flower-fence	<i>Caesalpinia pulcherrima</i>	S	15 feet
Bottle brush	<i>Callistemon rigidus</i>	N,C,S	15 feet
Devil's-backbone	<i>Pedilanthus tithymaloides</i>	C,S	6 feet
Blue sage	<i>Eranthemum pulchellum</i>	C,S	5 feet
Fatsia	<i>Fatsia japonica</i>	N,C,S	4 - 7 feet
Fire-thorn	<i>Pyracantha coccinea</i>	N,C	20 feet
Giant milkweed	<i>Calotropis gigantea</i>	S	15 feet
Grape hollies	<i>Mahonia</i> spp.	N,C	6 - 12 feet
Hedge cactus	<i>Cereus peruvianus</i>	N,C,S	25 feet
Holly malpighia	<i>Malpighia coccigera</i>	S	3 feet
Indian hawthorn	<i>Raphiolepis indica</i>	N	5 feet
Ixora	<i>Ixora coccinea</i>	C,S	15 feet
Jade plant	<i>Crassula argentea</i>	S	4 feet
Lucky nut	<i>Thevetia peruviana</i>	C,S	10 - 15 feet
Night cestrum	<i>Cestrum nocturnum</i>	C,S	12 feet

Table 3. Salt-Tolerant Shrubs for Florida

Common Name	Scientific Name	Range in Florida	Approximate Height
Pseuderanthemum	<i>Pseuderanthemum atropurpureum</i>	C,S	4 feet
Rattle box	<i>Sesbania punicea</i>	N,C,S	8 feet
Ribbon bush	<i>Homalocladium platycladum</i>	C,S	4 feet
Satsuki azalea	<i>Rhododendron indicum</i>	N,C,S	6 feet
Scarlet bush	<i>Hamelia patens</i>	S	12 feet
Vitex	<i>Vitex trifolia</i> 'Variegata'	C,S	12 feet
Slightly Salt-Tolerant Plants			
Aralia	<i>Polyscias</i> spp.	S	6 - 15 feet
Butterfly bush	<i>Buddleia officinalis</i>	N,C,S	20 feet
Chinese hat plant	<i>Holmskioldia sanguinea</i>	C,S	Variable
Copper leaf	<i>Acalypha wilkesiana</i>	C,S	15 feet
Coral plant	<i>Jatropha</i> spp.	S	10 - 15 feet
Crape jasmine	<i>Tabernaemontana divaricata</i>	C,S	10 feet
Crape myrtle	<i>Lagerstroemia indica</i>	N,C,S	20 feet
Croton	<i>Codiaeum variegatum</i>	C,S	10 feet
Cuphea	<i>Cuphea hyssopifolia</i>	C,S	1 - 2 feet
Hibiscus	<i>Hibiscus rosa-sinensis</i>	C,S	15 feet
Japanese privet	<i>Ligustrum japonicum</i>	N,C,S	15 feet
Pineapple guava	<i>Acca sellowiana</i>	N,C,S	18 feet
Plumbago	<i>Plumbago auriculata</i>	C,S	Variable
Poinsettia	<i>Euphorbia pulcherrima</i>	N,C,S	12 feet
Princess flower	<i>Tibouchina urvilleana</i>	C,S	15 feet
Rice-paper plant	<i>Tetrapanax papyriferus</i>	N,C,S	10 feet
Sanchezia	<i>Sanchezia speciosa</i>	C,S	6 feet

Table 3. Salt-Tolerant Shrubs for Florida

Common Name	Scientific Name	Range in Florida	Approximate Height
Snow bush	<i>Breyenia nivosa</i>	C,S	10 feet
Thryallis	<i>Galphimia glauca</i>	C,S	6 - 8 feet
Wintergreen barberry	<i>Berberis julianae</i>	N	6 feet
Yellow-elder	<i>Tecoma stans</i>	C,S	15 feet

Table 4. Salt-Tolerant Ground Covers for Florida

Common Name	Scientific Name	Range in Florida	Approximate Height
Salt-Tolerant Plants			
Confederate jasmine	<i>Trachelospermum jasminoides</i>	N,C,S	Variable
Coontie	<i>Zamia integrifolia</i>	N,C	24 inches
Creeping fig	<i>Ficus pumila</i>	N,C,S	12 inches
Dichondra	<i>Dichondra carolinensis</i>	N,C,S	2 inches
English ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>	N,C,S	4-6 inches
Fig-marigold	<i>Glottiphyllum depressum</i>	S	6 inches
Hottentot fig	<i>Carpobrotus edulis</i>	C,S	6 inches
Lily turf	<i>Ophiopogon japonicus</i>	N,C,S	18 inches
Lirope	<i>Lirope spicata</i>	N,C,S	18 inches
Purslane	<i>Portulaca</i> spp.	N,C,S	6 inches
Running strawberry bush	<i>Euonymus fortunei</i>	S	10 inches
Virginia creeper	<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>	N,C,S	Variable
Weeping lantana	<i>Lantana montevidensis</i>	C,S	18 - 24 inches
Moderately Salt-Tolerant Plants			
Kalanchoe	<i>Kalanchoe</i> spp.	S	24 inches
Blood leaf	<i>Alternanthera</i> spp.	C,S	12 inches

Table 4. Salt-Tolerant Ground Covers for Florida

Common Name	Scientific Name	Range in Florida	Approximate Height
Mexican flame vine	<i>Senecio confusus</i>	C,S	24 inches
Purple queen	<i>Setcreasea pallida</i>	N,C,S	24 inches
Wandering jew	<i>Zebrina pendula</i>	N,C,S	6 inches
Slightly Salt-Tolerant Plants			
Coleus	<i>Coleus blumei</i>	N,C,S	12 - 18 inches
Partridge berry	<i>Mitchella repens</i>	N,C,S	Variable
Transvaal daisy	<i>Gerbera jamesonii</i>	N,C,S	18 inches

Table 5. Salt-Tolerant Vines for Florida

Common Name	Scientific Name	Range in Florida	Approximate Height
Salt-Tolerant Plants			
Algerian ivy	<i>Hedera canariensis</i>	N,C,S	Variable
Bougainvillea	<i>Bougainvillea</i> spp.	C,S	Variable
Cape honeysuckle	<i>Tecomaria capensis</i>	C,S	Variable
Night blooming cereus	<i>Hylocereus undatus</i>	S	Variable
Rubber vine	<i>Cryptostegia grandiflora</i>	S	Variable
Moderately Salt-Tolerant Plants			
Creeping fig	<i>Ficus pumila</i>	N,C,S	Variable
Pink allamanda	<i>Mandevilla splendens</i>	C,S	Variable
Wax plant	<i>Hoya carnosa</i>	S	Variable
Woolly congea	<i>Congea tomentosa</i>	S	Variable
Slightly Salt-Tolerant Plants			
Allamanda	<i>Allamanda</i> spp.	C,S	Variable
Chalice vine	<i>Solandra guttata</i>	C,S	Variable

Table 5. Salt-Tolerant Vines for Florida

Common Name	Scientific Name	Range in Florida	Approximate Height
Downy jasmine	<i>Jasminum multiflorum</i>	C,S	Variable
Painted trumpet	<i>Clytostoma callistegioides</i>	N,C,S	Variable
Queens wreath	<i>Petrea volubilis</i>	S	Variable
Rangoon creeper	<i>Quisqualis indica</i>	S	Variable
Star jasmine	<i>Jasminum nitidum</i>	C,S	Variable