Do you know your Beach Plants?

Plants used in this restoration project occur naturally along coastal dunes throughout the Gulf Coast. Dune plants are adapted to the harsh conditions of the beach such as temperature extremes, saltwater spray and soil (mostly sand) that is low in nutrients and moisture. Plants in the dune system trap sand, which stabilizes dunes and promotes dune formation. For more information on the plants used in this project check out... http://wfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/dunes or visit the project sites on Navarre Beach at Public Access #7, 8, 10, and 11.

Beach elder (*Iva imbricata*) has sparse, woody, upright stems and fleshy narrow bright green leaves. Small lavender flowers occur in late summer. Beach elder accumulates sand rapidly and produces low rounded dunes.

Bitter panicum (*Panicum amarum*) is a tall, clumping, perennial grass with large, wide, silver/blue leaves. The upright growth form will stand out when compared to other species growing on the dunes.

How are dunes formed?

Coastal dunes are formed when sand is trapped around the stems, leaves and roots of plants in the vegetated areas of the beach.

Why are dunes important?

The sand dune system along Florida beaches helps protect the mainland and buildings from the force of tropical storms and hurricanes. The dune system absorbs the energy of storm waves.

Why use different plants to restore dunes?

Along the Gulf of Mexico, many different species of plants naturally occur on the dune system. Beach areas rich with many different species offer a diversity of plant sizes and forms and thus more opportunities for trapping sand. By imitating this richness in species, dunes can be restored in a natural way that may also benefit animal species that use the dunes for food or shelter.

Gulf bluestem (*Schizachyrium maritimum*) is a creeping, perennial grass easily identified by silvery blue leaves. The seed heads, which mature in late summer are distinguished by dense silvery hairs.

Sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*) is the dominant plant occurring on dunes and is crucial in the growth and maintenance of coastal dunes. It is a creeping, perennial grass, with narrow leaves and tall prominent flower spikes, which appear in early fall. The seed heads look like spiked oats. It has an extensive underground stem and root system, and burial by sand stimulates sea oats growth!

Would you like to learn more?

Your Florida Sea Grant agent is available for an on-site presentation to your school or homeowners organization

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Sea Grant Florida

For more information:

visit online:

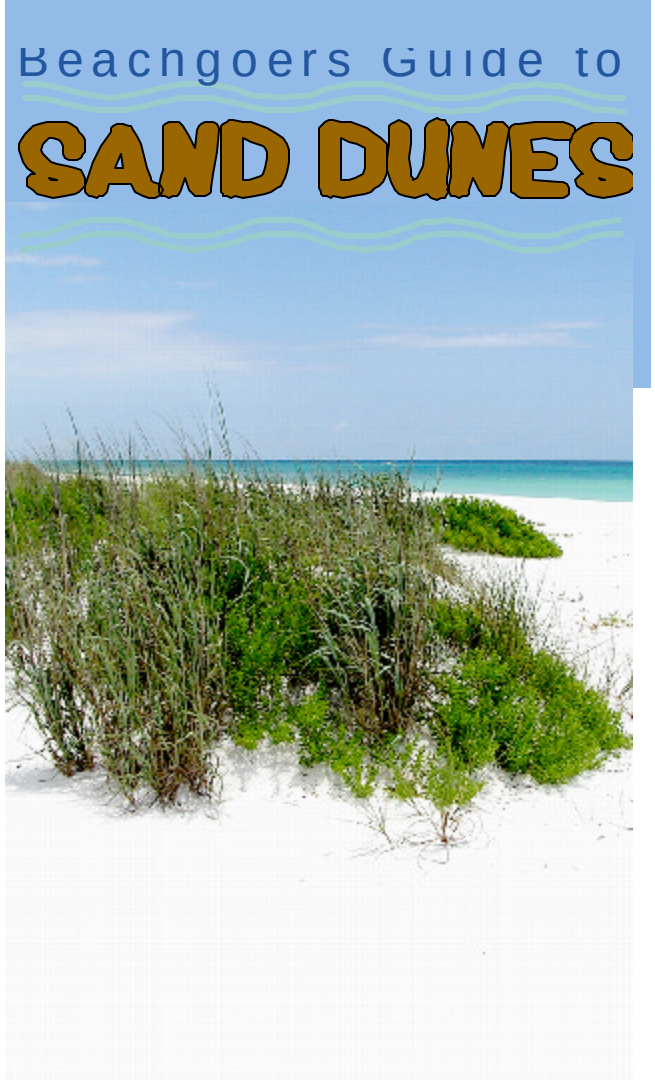
http://wfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/dunes

or call:

Christina Verlinde
UF/IFAS Florida Sea Grant
(850) 623-3868

Beachgoers Guide to

SAND DUNES



How to Care ...and Why!

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