



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Ernodea littoralis*¹

Edward F. Gilman²

Introduction

The Golden Creeper is a 1- to 3-foot-tall, prostrate ground cover that is native to south Florida beaches (Fig. 1). This plant has small, light green, succulent leaves borne on bright red stems that help it to survive in dry conditions. Inconspicuous, pinkish white, tubular flowers occur throughout the year and are followed by attractive golden berries. These golden berries, in part, give this plant its common name.

General Information

Scientific name: *Ernodea littoralis*

Pronunciation: air-NOE-dee-uh lit-taw-RAIL-liss

Common name(s): Golden-Creeper

Family: *Rubiaceae*

Plant type: ground cover

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: ground cover

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

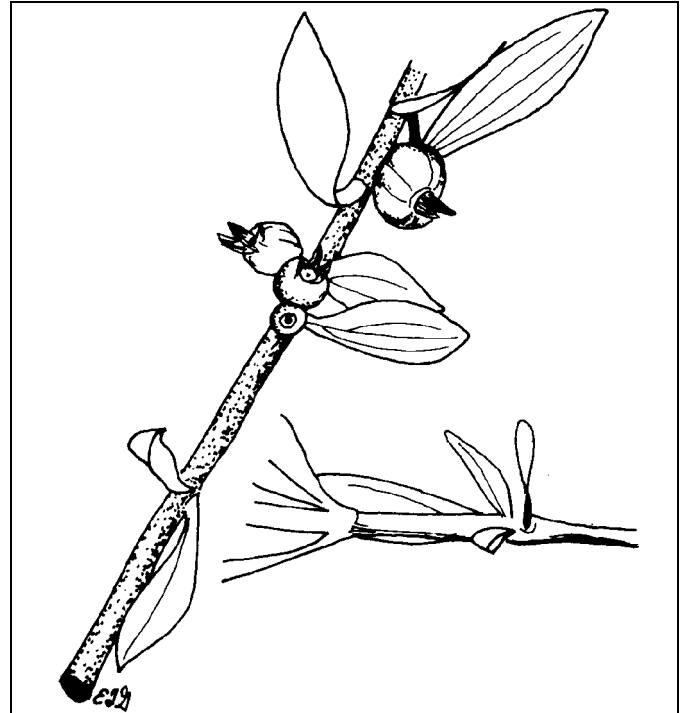


Figure 1. Golden-Creeper.

Description

Height: 1 to 3 feet

Spread: depends upon supporting structure

Plant habit: spreading; prostrate (flat)

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: bowed

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-196, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October, 1999 Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office. Florida Cooperative Extension Service / Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences / University of Florida / Christine Taylor Waddill, Dean



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristic: year-round flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: yellow

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: reddish

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; clay

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: good

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

The Golden Creeper is an excellent sand binder and is great for coastal landscapes. This ground cover is an outstanding landscape plant for south Florida coastal areas and could be used more often. It is also suited for planting in dry landscapes away from the coast receiving little or no irrigation.

Golden Creeper will thrive in well-drained sandy soils. It should be planted in an area of the landscape that receives full sun. *Ernodea littoralis* is tolerant of drought and salt spray but often dies back if over irrigated.

Pests and Diseases

Plants in well drained soils along the coast in the full sun usually have no problems.