



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Leucothoe axillaris*¹

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Introduction

This graceful and informal shrub may grow 2 to 6 feet in height and may spread 6 to 10 feet. Its arching stoloniferous stems support large, glossy, evergreen leaves. These dark green leaves turn to a purple-green color in the winter. The April flowers of Coastal *Leucothoe* are very small and occur in bell-shaped racemes. These flowers are white or pinkish-white and are borne in the leaf axils. The fruits of this shrub are inconspicuous capsules.

General Information

Scientific name: *Leucothoe axillaris*

Pronunciation: loo-KAHTH-oh-ee ack-sil-LAIR-iss

Common name(s): Dog-Hobble, Coastal *Leucothoe*

Family: *Ericaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 9 (Fig. 1)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: mass planting; ground cover; border

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

Description

Height: 2 to 6 feet

Spread: 6 to 10 feet

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate; serrulate

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: purple

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white; pinkish-white

Flower characteristic: spring flowering; inconspicuous and not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Trunk and Branches

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

Current year stem/twig color: brown

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

Coastal Leucothoe is outstanding in masses and is a good choice for enclosed city gardens. It is commonly used in the landscape as a specimen, ground cover, and border plant. This shrub is also impressive when naturalized along wooded stream banks.

Coastal Leucothoe should be grown in a partially or densely shaded site; it grows best in areas that receive morning sunlight. The soil in its natural, Baldcypress dome habitat has a high organic matter and silt content and is acidic. This makes Doghobble a good choice for shaded, wet sites. This plant can be rejuvenated into vigorous growth in the center of the plant if the 2 and 3 year old canes are removed after bloom.

Coastal Leucothoe is propagated by seeds and cuttings.

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade

Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; sand; loam; clay;

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pests and Diseases

Leaf spots may cause Coastal *Leucothoe* to look undesirable; at least 8 species of fungi infect *Leucothoe* spp. When this plant is grown in conditions that are not ideal, leaf spot will produce ugly lesions that often enlarge and consume the entire leaf. Root rot problems may also occur in wet soil.