



Common Name: SEA-BEACH KNOTWEED

Scientific Name: *Polygonum glaucum* Nuttall

Other Commonly Used Names: sea-side knotweed, glaucous knotweed

Previously Used Scientific Names: *Polygonum aviculare* Linnaeus var. *glaucum* (Nuttall) Torrey

Family: Polygonaceae (buckwheat)

Rarity Ranks: G3/SH

State Legal Status: Special Concern

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: FACU+

Description: Annual or perennial **herb** with fleshy **stems** 8 - 28 inches (20 - 70 cm) long, erect or spreading, branching from top of a taproot. **Leaves** up to $1\frac{3}{16}$ inch (3 cm) long, lance-shaped, fleshy, edges inrolled, blue-green, alternate. **Leaf stalk** and **flower stalk** are enclosed in a fringed, silver and brown, papery sheath (**ocrea**), about $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (7 - 15 mm) long, that encircles the

stem. **Flowers** less than $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (2 - 3 mm) long, with 5 white or pink sepals and no petals. **Fruit** a dark brown, 3-sided nutlet, less than $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (2.5 - 3 mm) long, protruding beyond the sepals.

Similar Species: Sea-purslane (*Sesuvium portulacastrum*), with opposite, spoon-shaped leaves, and sea rocket (*Cakile edentula*), with lobed, toothed leaves, are also fleshy, spreading beach plants; neither of these have ocrea encircling the stem. Knotweed (*Polygonum aviculare*), with bright green leaves, occurs in disturbed areas in the Piedmont.

Related Rare Species: Meisner's tear-thumb (*Polygonum meisnerianum* var. *beyrichianum*, synonym: *Persicaria meisneriana* var. *beyrichiana*, Special Concern) occurs in a blackwater river floodplain in Brooks County. It is a vine with sharp, down-pointing prickles on the stems and narrowly lance-shaped (not arrowhead-shaped) leaves that lack leaf stalks.

Habitat: Beach dunes and interdune swales where it thrives in washes and recently deposited sands.

Life History: Little is known about the biology of sea-beach knotweed; clearly it thrives in high-salinity, frequently disturbed, sandy habitats. Other species of knotweeds produce seeds following both self- and cross-pollination. Sea-beach knotweed seeds are likely dispersed by sea currents and birds.

Survey Recommendations: Surveys are best conducted during flowering (May–October) and fruiting (June–November), although the sprawling, fleshy stems with encircling leaf sheaths are distinctive throughout the growing season.

Range: Georgia, Florida, and north along the Atlantic coast to Maine.

Threats: Beach development, vehicle use on beaches, dune stabilization projects.

Georgia Conservation Status: Plants were once known from Sapelo and Cumberland Islands, but have not been seen in decades.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Avoid beach development, dune stabilization projects, and vehicle use on beaches. Fund field surveys to re-locate plants.

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Author of Species Account: Linda G. Chafin

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L. Chafin, July 2008: original account

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