



## BEACH ZONE PLANTING

*(Author's Note: This is the thirteenth in a series of articles by members of the City of Sanibel Vegetation Committee dealing with vegetative matters of concern to island residents. Members of the Vegetation Committee are Sanibel residents appointed by City Council for one-year terms. To be considered for appointment, contact the City Manager's Office at (239) 472-3700.)*

Sanibel, as a barrier island, is fortunate to have a number of distinct ecological zones, each with its own characteristics. As such, we are committed to protect and conserve these areas from harmful impacts on the resources they provide. The coastal beach zone has the added challenge of protecting beaches from serious erosion, providing resting and nesting for numbers of shorebirds and turtles, and allowing access to a vast numbers of beachgoers.

The native plant communities on both the fore dune (closest to the water's edge) and the back dune are impacted by wind, flooding, sandy soil, salt spray and at times, the effects of tropical storms and hurricanes. Whole areas of beach may be significantly altered by these events, but having a vegetated dune can help reduce impacts to developed areas along the beachfront. Native plants that grow in the dune are tolerant of this high energy environment. A stable dune holds sand to help control erosion and also provides protection from strong winds.



**A healthy community of dune vegetation includes sea oats, dune sunflowers, and railroad vine.**

**Photo Credit: Dana Dettmar, Conservation Officer**

Because of the important natural services provided by the beach dune system, Sanibel's vegetation regulations provide protection and guidance for vegetated areas seaward of the 1974 coastal construction control line (CCCL), also known as the Gulf Beach Zone, aka the beach dune. Section 122-170 of Sanibel's code of ordinances details information about trimming, revegetation, and removal of non-native plants in the Gulf beach zone. A Vegetation Permit is required for the transplanting, removal, or trimming of any vegetation seaward of the 1974 CCCL. Through the permitting process,

the City is able to encourage responsible trimming practices and protect Sanibel's valuable beach dune ecosystem while still providing property owners and tenants a reasonable view and aesthetics. Based on the Sanibel Code, each permit includes a list of custom, site-specific, special trimming conditions that take into account:

- The physiological effects of trimming on dune plant species
- The maintenance of the beach dune habitat for plants and wildlife
- The appearance of the dune and background structure from the beachfront in accordance with the Sanibel Plan
- The owner/applicant's desire for view maintenance and aesthetic dune areas

Sanibel's beach zone is an ecosystem that supports and protects both the natural environment and human activity. Removal of invasive exotic species is a condition of each dune trimming permit, so be on the lookout for Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), exotic inkberry/beach naupaka (*Scaevola taccada*), Mother-in-law's tongue (*Sansevieria hyacinthoides*) and other pesky exotics. Both the Florida Administrative Code and City vegetation standards require that all plants installed in beach and coastal areas (seaward of the 1974 CCCL) be native species. Some great natives that are appropriate for the beach dune include: sea grape (*Coccoloba uvifera*), golden creeper (*Ernodea littoralis*), inkberry (*Scaevola plumieri*), saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), dune sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*), prickly pear (*Opuntia humifusa*) and railroad vine (*Ipomoea pes-caprae*). Sea oats, one of Sanibel's most common dune plants, is also one of the most important. The extensive root system and the close growth of the stems and leaves help to stabilize the sand and mitigate wind.



Each year the City of Sanibel uses TDC funding to plant additional vegetation in the dune area of City beaches.

Photo Credit: Joel Caouette, Conservation Officer

To read other Vegetation Committee articles in this series please visit the City of Sanibel's Natural Resources Department website: <http://www.mysanibel.com/Departments/Natural-Resources>