

With right plants it's possible to have a garden at the coast

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With sunny skies and warmer weather, a lot of us are heading to the coast. Boating, fishing and swimming are not the only options for filling up a Saturday afternoon. Gardening can be a delight, as well as a challenge, when you're dealing with salt spray, sandy soil and the piercing sun.

Don't give up; with the addition of the proper soil amendments and the right plants, you can have a beautifully landscaped area, as well as a garden, down at the beach.

In order to consider plant material, it is necessary to understand the coastal zones and the plant material that thrives in those areas.

The Pioneer Zone - This is basically the "beach," It is the area that begins at the water and ends at the dunes (highest for salt spray). The plants thriving in this area are native and include, but are not limited to,

- beach morning glory (*Ipomoea imperati*)
- sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*)
- water pennywort (*Hydrocotyle bonariensis*)
- purslane (*Sesuvium portulacastrum*).

It goes without saying that we need to leave this area alone. The good Lord will tend to it and He needs no help from us.

The Transition Zone (or Back dunes) - If you have a beach house on the Gulf side, you are in this zone. You are most likely to see:

- saw palmettos (*Serenoa repens*)
- yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*)
- Spanish bayonet (*Yucca aloifolia*)
- prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia stricta*)
- scrub live oak (*Quercus geminata*)
- wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*)
- cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*)
- Florida rosemary (*Ceratiola ericoides*)
- muhley grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*)

along with many of the same plants from the pioneer zone.

The Stable Zone - This zone is the most inland and consists mainly of the plants found in the Transition zone. The biggest difference is there is less salt spray and more organic matter in the soil.

You will have the most success from landscaping with native plants. If you feel the need to introduce plant material, it will be necessary to amend the existing soil (sand) with soil that is much higher in organic matter. It is also important to make sure you have adequate water available. If you put your plants in the ground during cooler weather, they will perform better and you will need less water.

Gardening at the Coast zone 8b

If you're interested in starting and keeping a perennial garden at the coast, the following is a list of hardy perennials in our area (Zone 8b) that have been proven to flourish:

- Yarrow (*Achillea filipendulina*)
- Artemisia (*Artemisia ludoviciana albula*)
- Red-hot-poker (*Kniphofia Uvaria*)
- Crinums (*Crinum* spp.)
- Daylilies (*Hemerocallis* spp.)
- Lantanas (*Lantanas* spp.)
- California bush daisy (*Gamolepsis chrysanthemoides*)
- Agapanthus (*Agapanthus africanus*)
- Blanket flower (*Gaillardia pulchella*)
- Dusty-miller (*Senecio cineraria*)-annual
- Hawaiian hibiscus (*Hibiscus Rosa-sinensis*) - It's an annual in our area because of the frost
- Society garlic (*Tulbaghia violacea*)
- Verbena (*Verbana* spp.)

With the right plants, the right soil conditions and water on hand, your landscape is sure to succeed. Good luck and happy gardening.

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