

Canavalia rosea – Beach Bean/Wild Jack Bean

Canavalia rosea, commonly known as Beach Bean or Wild Jack Bean is a mostly herbaceous vine that trails along beach dunes and coastal sand. It has a pantropical distribution and occurs naturally on seashores in the tropics and subtropics throughout the world. Beach Bean is usually found growing on the upper beaches and sand dunes and on seaside cliffs.

The thick, fleshy stem can grow to 6 m or more in length and more than 2.5 cm in diameter. The stem is rather woody near the base and several branches radiate outward, forming mats of light green semi-succulent foliage.

Beach bean has compound leaves with three thick, more or less rounded, fleshy leaflets, each about 6 cm long and the leaflets fold up under the hot sun at midday. The flowers are typical pea flowers, purplish pink, about 5 cm long and borne in erect spikes on long stalks blooming most of the summer and sporadically the rest of the year. The pods are flat and 10 to 15 cm long and are prominently ridged and woody when mature.

Beach bean hasn't really been discovered by the horticultural community yet, but it has great potential for xeriscape gardening. It is an excellent ground cover for dry sandy areas and is certainly a must-have for seaside gardens. Use beach bean as a ground cover where you have full sun, poor soil, and drought conditions.

Beach Bean is used as a biomass cover crop in Third World countries and in arid lands in Australia and Africa where its amazingly rapid growth quickly covers even the harshest soils and is used as an effective control against soil erosion in many parts of the world.

The young pods and seeds are edible and used for food in northern Australia. Mature seeds must be boiled or roasted to render them edible. An infusion was made with the crushed roots and rubbed over the skin for rheumatism, general pain, skin disorders, and colds.

The sturdy, fast growing beach bean thrives in almost any well drained soil. It is highly salt tolerant. It will have to be pruned to be kept in check. Site in full sun. Beach bean is drought tolerant and will tolerate watering as long as the soil has excellent drainage.

Propagation

Soak seed overnight in warm water

Sow seed to half the depth of its length in any good potting or seedling mix.

Grow on as desired and plant out in its final position.