

Nature Notes

...from Sharon

The genus *Ipomoea* (from the Greek *ips* ~ *ipos*, worm-weed or bindweed, and *homoeos* referring to the twining habit) has 68 species, making it the largest in the *Convolvulaceae* family which has over 500 species. Most of the species are twining, climbing vines. The *Ipomoea* is related to the sweet potato family.

The Oceanblue Morning Glory (*Ipomoea indica*) is listed in the Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants as a native species of Florida, although another reliable source indicates that it is being investigated as to whether or not it is an introduced species.

This plant will only attain a height of 4 to 6 inches as a ground cover, but can spread along the ground almost indefinitely. One easy to see in the Preserve right now is located on the most southerly boardwalk from parking area #1, on the left as you head to the beach and before reaching the intersection with the boardwalk that runs north/south. It is growing at the edge of the boardwalk near a post, as shown in the photo above. A smaller one is just creeping up the edge of the most northerly boardwalk as it jogs to the right just before the beach.

Oceanblue Morning Glory (*Ipomoea indica*)



This plant roots and branches at the nodes and spreads very rapidly. It is a great dune stabilizer and readily adapts to the sandy coastal areas, as it tolerates drought and salt spray. This is another beautiful and beneficial plant found in the Preserve. The three-lobed leaves of this trailing vine are bright green and densely cover the thin stems. The bluish-purple, funnel-shaped flowers have a pinkish throat and are generally 2 ½ to 3 inches wide. Each blossom opens only once. They open in the early morning and close before the end of each day. One gardener reported their Oceanblue Morning Glories start out a bright blue in early morning, changing to a darker blue by mid-day, then to a purplish-blue and finally to a dark pink at the end of the day.

Sometimes the different species of morning glories can be confusing to distinguish from one another, in that the many varieties covet the same type of territory, their vines may inter-twine, making the flowers look as if they are on one vine when they are actually on another. Just look at the picture to the right and see if you can find the leaf of the Oceanblue Morning Glory among the heart-shaped leaves of the Common Morning Glory. (Hint: Look for the three-lobed leaf next to the small red arrow. Now, you won't find the red arrow when you go out on the boardwalk, but do look for the two different types of leaves and see how many places you can find them throughout the Preserve.)



This plant also adapts readily to the home landscape for use as a groundcover or to climb a trellis, fence, or other support. This plant maybe toxic if ingested.