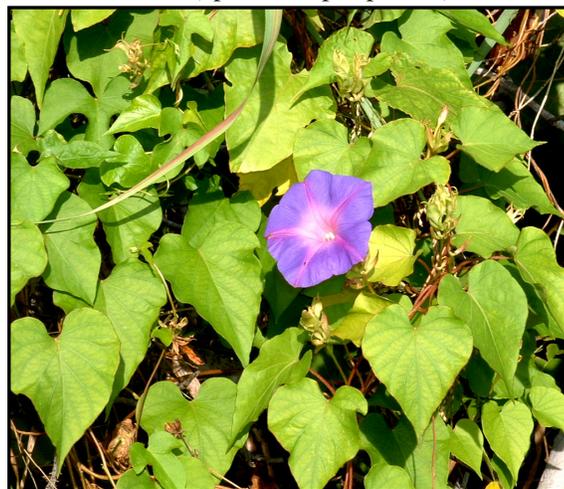


Nature Notes

...from Sharon

Common Morning Glory (*Ipomoea purpurea*)

The Common Morning Glory is an herbaceous vine that is native to the southeastern United States. This plant, unlike the Beach Morning Glory, can be grown throughout central and south Florida along the coast. It is in the sweet potato family. Although it only attains a height of 4 to 6 inches as a ground cover, it can spread along the ground almost indefinitely, as it roots and branches at the nodes and spreads very rapidly. It is well adapted to beaches and coastal dunes. It is most useful as a sand binder in coastal landscapes. This vine is an excellent coastal ground cover and will also provide a screen or shelter if it is given a support to climb upon—such as the Sea Grape in the dune area. This plant will flourish in full sun on well-drained, sandy soils. It is very tolerant of drought and salt air.



The common Morning Glory blossoms are funnel-shaped bluish-purple flowers with a white center and generally 2 ½ to 3 inches wide. Flowers can also be pinkish or occasionally white. They open in the early morning and close before noon each day during the blooming season. In contrast to the other Morning Glories, the flowers are borne in the winter and spring. The flower usually lasts for a single morning and dies in the afternoon; however, being in a tropical climate, the blooming season is extended. On a cloudy day, the flower may last until night. New flowers bloom each day. The flowers usually start to fade a couple of hours before the petals start showing visible curling. As you can see in the picture to the left, this flower has started to fade and curl. Each flower is replaced by a globoid seed capsule about 1/3" across that is hairless. The large seeds are dark-colored and wedge-shaped. This plant spreads by reseeding itself. You may see this plant throughout the Preserve in the full sun areas. Check out the boardwalk between parking areas #1 and #2 and you will see it blooming in abundance right now. The glossy green leaves are cordate in shape (heart shaped) and densely cover the slender stems. The new leaves have red veins that turn green after a short time.



Common Morning Glory can be distinguished from other *Ipomoea* by the color of its flowers (usually blue, purple, pink, or some combination of these colors with white center) and the shape of its leaves (never lobed). It differs from many bindweeds (*Calystegia* & *Convolvulus*) by its heart-shaped (cordate) leaves; the leaves of bindweeds are often arrowhead-shaped. Among the several species in the Bindweed family, the characteristics of the seed capsules can be useful in making an accurate identification. For example, the seed capsule of Common Morning Glory is 3-celled and its exterior surface is hairless, while other species in this plant family may have seed capsules that are 2-celled or hairy. The *Ipomoea* can be dangerous to ingest.

Common Morning Glory is easily grown in home gardens in a container or above-ground planter; as ground cover; cascading down a wall; or climbing a trellis. It is a rapidly growing plant and requires frequent pruning to keep it in bounds in the home landscape. A neighbor has one growing up a pine tree in their yard and it looks very nice—especially when blooming. These also attract hummingbirds.