



Keys Blackbead *Pithecellobium keyense*

Beautiful Blackbead, how we love you!

Let us count the many reasons we love Blackbead. The website [Natives in Your Neighborhood](#) says that Blackbead:

- Is a *Threatened* species that we should grow just to help out Mother Nature.
- Provides food and cover for wildlife.
- Larval host plant for cassius blue (*Leptotes cassius theonus*), large orange sulphur (*Phoebis agarithe*), and Miami blue (*Cyclargus thomasi bethunebakeri*) butterflies.
- Nectar plant for cassius blue, Florida duskywing (*Ephyriades brunneus*), Florida white (*Appias drusilla*), giant swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*), great southern white (*Ascia monuste*), hammock skipper (*Polygonus leo*), large orange sulphur, mangrove skipper (*Phocides pigmalion*), Miami blue, Palatka skipper (*Euphyes pilatka*), southern broken-dash (*Wallengrenia otho*), three-spotted skipper (*Cymaenes tripunctus*), twin-spot skipper (*Oligorio maculata*) and other butterflies.
- Birds eat the brightly-colored arils.

A **host plant** for butterflies is the specific plant species on which the butterfly's caterpillars (larval stage) feed and develop. **Nectar plants** are those that provide nectar, a sweet, sugar-rich liquid, that adult butterflies consume for energy. While host plants are crucial for caterpillar survival, nectar plants are essential for the adult butterfly's food source and long-term survival.

A perfect reason to grow blackbead in your yard.



All About Growing Blackbead

- Shrub can grow to up to 10-15 ft, but can be kept to 6-10 ft tall with occasional pruning for size and fullness.
- White/orange/pink very fragrant and showy flowers that bloom profusely in late fall through spring.
- Recommended as a screen or hedge plant or informal foundation shrub.
- Fruits are contorted and split open to reveal red seeds, which birds love.
- Can grow in full sun or part shade.
- Propagation typically via seed (soak overnight in water and then clean before planting). Look for seeds now in nature.
- Easy-to-care-for plant tolerates drought and occasional/brief saltwater inundation as with storm surges.
- Tolerates our high pH soils, lime rock, sand.
- Deer and iguanas ignore it.





At left, cleaning of the blackbead seeds after soaking, in readiness for planting. Taken from the **Seasons** project book by members Kitty Somerville, Lynne Bentley-Kemp, Mary LaDue and Deb Crowley.

If you would like to borrow the book to learn how to propagate this plant and others, [please contact Kitty directly](#).

Blackbead can readily be propagated in this way, or purchased from native plant nurseries.

Photos and research credits: Kitty Somerville, Univ of FL IFAS, Christa Varacalli, IRC Natives for your Neighborhood, FL Wildflower Foundation

Smart Watering Tips - Florida-Friendly Tip #2: Water Efficiently



According to the University of Florida (IFAS), watering landscape plants deeply once or twice a week in the summer is usually enough, with each watering session delivering about 3/4-inch of water.

- **Best times** are early morning **before 10 a.m.**, and early evening **after 4 p.m.** Watering in the hot sun will evaporate the water (wasting it) and sometimes even cause leaf burn -- and "gardener burn" for us as well!
- If you water in the evening, make sure the **leaves have enough time to dry before dark**, or you will invite fungal issues.
- Remember, you are **watering the roots**, not the leaves.
- Don't forget the **importance of mulch** to keep moisture in and heat out.
- Remember to **check the heat level** of the water in the hose - it is as likely to burn you as to cook those precious plants.

Here at the Garden Club, we always make sure to water **with a gentle rain-like spray**, NEVER a needle-point jet or full-hose delivery. **Yes, it is hot outside, and walking over to that far-away plant is tedious**, but your plant wants rain, not a planting hole gouged by water at full speed, disrupting its roots and its happy zen flow. Happy plants, happy gardener!



Our favorite hose-end water sprayer - Eight sprays on one small device!

[Melnor Thumb Control 8-Pattern Nozzle](#)

<https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/putnamco/2024/06/20/smart-water-saving-tips/>