



Rugged Dune Life

As fierce winter storms and pounding waves grind endlessly—shaping and reshaping this coastal shoreline—powerful winds pick up the beach sands and carry them inland. When driftwood or a clump of debris slows the wind, it drops its load of sand to form a mound. These mounds are the basis of a low, shifting dune system.

Low-growing native dune plants have adapted to the extreme conditions and shifting sands of the coastal dunes. In the absence of exotic species such as European beachgrass, several rare plants survive and flourish in the dune environment.



Beach evening primrose and related species produce large amounts of seeds that can establish in wave-bared places, enabling these plants to survive powerful winds and shifting sands.



To survive strong winds, salt spray, and seasonal drought, dune plants such as sand verbena (above) have special adaptations such as moisture-retaining leaves and large fleshy taproots that help stabilize the dunes.



Driftwood logs create sheltered areas where accumulated organic material helps seeds such as beach strawberry germinate and provides homes and food for insects, birds, and other wildlife.