

SEA-BEACH EVENING-PRIMROSE

Oenothera humifusa

By Helen Hamilton, *Past-president of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

This perennial of sandy beaches blooms from May through October, but was recently seen in bloom in the Virginia Beach area. The stems are grayish-white, hairy, and somewhat woody erect, or prostrate, to two feet tall. Leaves on the stem are oblong, to 4 inches, petioles are tiny or absent. The lemon-yellow flowers (which darken with age) have four petals; in the center, 8 stamens surround the stigma which has four branches, forming a cross. The flowers open at twilight, and are pollinated by moths, notably the sphinx moth.

Seabeach Evening-primrose occurs along the coast from New Jersey to Louisiana, and has been recorded in 8 coastal counties of Virginia.

The genus name was used by Theophrastus for a related species; *humifusa* means “spreading on the ground.” The Evening-Primroses group has been called “hopelessly confused and freely hybridizing” (Fernald 1950). ❖



Photo: Sea-beach Evening-primrose (*Oenothera humifusa*) taken by Helen Hamilton
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