

Angela,

Here is a list of shrubs/small trees that would work in sandy conditions. Some are more salt tolerant than others and may work on the back of primary dunes. All would work on secondary dunes and inland along sandy sidewalks. Most are full sun. I plucked this info from a variety of sources, so some is more detailed than others. Each species is available from our nursery this Fall.

Arrowwood Viburnum

(*Viburnum dentatum*)



Photo: University of Connecticut Plant Database

Arrowwood viburnum is a dense, multi-stemmed shrub that typically grows 5 to 9 feet tall and wide. The branches are upright and spreading and arch at the tips. The leaves are either a shiny or flat dark green and turn yellow or red to red-purple in the late fall. The showy flowers are small, white, flattened clusters, which bloom late May to early June. The fruit, which can be of an intense blue color, is ornamental and a food source for birds. Arrowwood is very easy to grow, being well adapted to full sun or partial shade and to dry or fairly wet soils. Arrowwood is useful for its hardiness, as a border or screen, for naturalized plantings, to attract birds, and for difficult sites. This shrub is free from serious problems, with the only main maintenance requirement being an occasional rejuvenation pruning. (native)

Beach Plum
(*Prunus maritima*)



Photo: Alexey Zinovjev and Irina Kadis, Salicicola

Beach plum is a fast-growing, deciduous shrub with an average height of 4 to 7 feet, but can reach heights of 10 to 12 feet in inland, nutrient-rich soils. The plant, which is native to coastal areas of Massachusetts, is adapted to medium fertility, slightly acidic, loamy, and sandy soils. Over time, extensive colonies may develop from a single plant. In spring, snowy white flowers expand before the leaves, which are a dull-green color. The fruit ripens from August to October and can be harvested and processed into jam, syrup, and puree. Because of its tolerance of salt and its deep roots, beach plum is useful for stabilizing sand and landscaping a coastal dune. (native)

Bearberry
(*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)

Bearberry, with its leathery, dark, evergreen leaves, small white/pink urn-shaped flowers, bright red berries, and thick growing character, is



Photo: G.A. Cooper, courtesy of Smithsonian Institution

a popular groundcover/low shrub choice. It grows 6 to 12 inches high and spreads from 3 to 6 feet wide. Over time, bearberry can spread by stem rooting to cover a very large area of up to 15 feet in diameter. The small flowers bloom from April to May and bright red fruits appear from August through the winter. The fruit is eaten by a few species of songbirds and other wildlife. Bearberry has the added benefit of being a very effective stabilizer of steep slopes or exposed areas. It is often planted around home sites, sand dunes, and sandy banks. (native)

**Black Chokeberry
(Aronia melanocarpa)**



Photo: Alexey Zinovjev and Irina Kadis, Salicicola

Black chokeberry is a hardy, multi-stemmed shrub that grows 3 to 6 feet in height and width and tends to form broad thickets. This shrub offers multi-seasonal qualities, including clusters of small white flowers in the spring, high-quality leaves in the summer, and persistent fruit and bright red foliage in the fall. The fibrous root system is very effective at holding soil and is therefore a good choice for erosion control. Black chokeberry is adaptable to many conditions, including sandy and rocky areas, dry or wet soils, and full sun or partial shade. Black chokeberry is not, however, considered drought tolerant. The chokeberries provide ornamental interest through much of winter because the fruit are very astringent to birds and won't be eaten until other fruits are depleted. Chokeberries are edible by humans and are used in many recipes. (This shrub does best when planted away from direct exposure to wind and salt spray.) (native)

**Eastern Ninebark
(Physocarpus opulifolius)**



Photo: John Hixson, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Eastern ninebark, or common ninebark, is a dense, mound-shaped, deciduous shrub that grows from 3 to 10 feet tall and 4 to 6 feet wide. The individual, white-to-pinkish, 5-petaled flowers that appear on flat-topped clusters from May to June give way to papery clusters of red fruit pods from August to early October. Ninebark is extremely hardy, drought-tolerant, and well adapted to a wide range of soil conditions, including moist to dry sites, gravel to clay textures, and partial shade to full sun. Ninebark is also fast growing and will re-sprout from the base vigorously if cut back. It can be used in a garden border, as a screen, or for erosion control on banks. The common name comes from the excessive peeling of the bark—as if it had nine layers or nine lives. The flowers are an excellent source of nectar for butterflies and bees, and the fruits are eaten by many species of birds. (not native; native to New York south to Florida and west to Colorado)

**Northern Bayberry
(Myrica pensylvanica)**

Northern bayberry is a woody shrub averaging 5 to 7 feet in height, with a thicket-forming character. The dark green leaves are aromatic and may stay on the branches for most of the winter. The flowers and white fruit (which are also



Photo: NOAA Estuarine Research Reserve Collection, NOAA Photo Library

aromatic) are somewhat inconspicuous, and the berries are a staple food for many species of wildlife. The native bayberry is adapted to a wide variety of soil conditions, but does best on light-textured soils—it spreads naturally into bare sandy soils. Since it does form thickets, bayberry is useful for erosion control and wildlife shelter. (native)

Red Chokeberry

(*Aronia arbutifolia*)



Photo: University of Connecticut Plant Database

Red chokeberry is native throughout most of the eastern United States and is found in various habitats from dry hillsides to wetland areas. This deciduous shrub grows from 6 to 10 feet tall and 3 to 5 feet wide. It is a suckering, spreading, colonizing shrub with numerous, slender stems. Red chokeberry is tolerant of partial shade and of both dry and wet sites. It can be transplanted easily and is valued for its summer flowers, persistent fruit, and colorful fall foliage. It is useful for naturalistic plantings, bank and dune stabilization, colonization and mass plantings, or borders in a garden. (native)

Sweet Fern

(*Comptonia peregrina*)



Photo: University of Connecticut Plant Database

Sweet fern is a low-growing, deciduous native shrub that is 2 to 4 feet in height, with sweet-scented, fern-like leaves that are particularly aromatic when crushed. Sweet fern is a loosely branched, spreading, and colonizing plant. The flowers are small, inconspicuous catkins that bloom from April to May. Sweet fern is extremely cold hardy and prefers acidic, sandy, or peaty soils with low fertility, but does not tolerate shading. Sweet fern produces many underground stems or rhizomes, making it an effective groundcover for erosion control on steep, sandy banks and for species diversity in sterile, sandy soils. (native)

Virginia Creeper

(*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)

Virginia creeper is a woody, deciduous vine that can climb to heights up to 100 feet on trees or other tall structures or form a dense ground cover. This vigorously growing vine climbs by



Photo: Sally and Andy Wasowski, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

means of tendrils with disks that fasten onto the host surface. The ornamental, five-part leaves emerge purplish in spring, mature to green in summer, and change to purple or mauve/red in fall. Virginia creeper is fairly shade tolerant and salt tolerant and can thrive in a wide range of soil types, including the dry conditions found on coastal dunes. Though it has a rather open canopy, Virginia creeper can be useful as an erosion control measure because of its sprouting and spreading character. Virginia creeper also provides cover for many small birds and mammals and the blue berries that appear in August to October are eaten by songbirds. (Note: The berries are highly toxic to humans and may be fatal if eaten.) (native)

Virginia Rose
(*Rosa virginiana*)



Photo: University of Connecticut Plant Database

Virginia rose is a native shrub, growing 2 to 6 feet high, with many spreading branches, thorny stems, and attractive flowers. The dark green, toothed leaves turn purplish-red in the fall. The fragrant 2- to 3-inch diameter flowers are pink with yellow centers and bloom from June through August. Many insects that visit the rose blooms for nectar help pollinate the flowers that later become rose hips. The ½-inch-wide rose hips stay on the plant through winter, are edible, are high in Vitamin C and essential fatty acids, are a good food source for many animals, and can be used to make teas and medicines. Virginia rose prefers full sun and well-drained, acidic soil (but can also survive in moist soils). Virginia rose is easy to transplant and grow, is tolerant of salt, and does well under winter conditions, making it a good specimen for seaside planting. The thicket-forming character provides a great hedge and good cover for birds and other animals. (native)

Two more with no photos:

<i>Rosa carolina</i>	Pasture/ Carolina Rose	May	S	M	3-6'	Pink	Deciduous shrub w/showy and fragrant flowers;best flowering and disease resistant in full sun; inner dune stabilizer.
<i>Rhus copallina</i>	Winged Sumac	July- Aug	S- Pt Sun	M-D	5-6 to 20'	Yellow/ white	Dioecious, Central leaf stalks are winged; Red fall foliage; Nectar; Larval host to many butterflies, moths, beetles. Birds eat fruit in fall and winter. Somewhat rhizomous.
Black Cherry (<i>Prunus serotina</i>)							Black cherry is a deciduous tree with a dense oval crown and pendulous branches. This rapid-growing tree reaches from 60 to 90 feet tall and 35 to 50 feet wide. In the spring, black cherry produces fragrant white flowers on pendulous stems. The berry-like fruits mature in the late summer. This tree prefers deep, moist, fertile soil, but is tolerant of salt and drought and thrives in full sun to part shade. Black cherry is one of the most valued cabinet and furniture woods in North America. The fruits are important food for numerous bird species and mammals, including the red fox, black bear, raccoon, opossum, squirrel, and rabbit. (native)



Photo: University of Connecticut Plant Database

Eastern Red Cedar

(*Juniperus virginiana*)



Photo: Alexey Zinovjev and Irina Kadis, Salicicola

Eastern red cedar is a native evergreen that grows 10 to 40 feet high with a pyramidal shape that becomes rounder with age. It is tolerant of salt and dry soils and is good for both exposed areas and sheltered coastal areas. The light-blue berries are an important food source for many birds and large and small mammals. In addition, cedars provide important protective cover for nesting, roosting, and winter shelter. Eastern red cedar is excellent as a specimen planting and useful in masses for windbreaks and screening. The leaves, roots, and berries of the red cedar have been used by the Native Americans for centuries as a botanical cure for many ailments, including asthma, colds, fevers, and hyperactivity, and for general cleansing and healing.

([native](#))

NOTE ON RUGOSA ROSE: from Univ. of CT plant database



Rugosa rose (*Rosa rugosa*) is considered to be non-native (native to eastern Asia) and **potentially invasive** in some regions or habitats of Massachusetts and may displace desirable vegetation if not properly managed. The shrub is often planted on coastal sites because it is extremely tolerant of sea spray and storms, making it well adapted to the coastal environment. On dune sites, the shrub is useful for erosion control and stabilization and because of its thorny stems can also be strategically planted to direct pedestrians away from or between sand dunes. However, because of its ability to spread by seeds and by rhizomes, it has an ability to outcompete and displace other native beach and dune plants. In addition, on bank sites, rugosa rose is less effective at controlling erosion and may in fact worsen the problem when other more effective erosion control plants are unable to grow due to shading effects. Therefore, care should be taken when considering planting rugosa rose on coastal properties.