

# Please call 1-866-invader if you suspect you have found this species

**Saltmeadow cordgrass**  
*Spartina patens*

**Other common names:** salt marsh cordgrass

**USDA symbol:** SPPA  
**ODA rating:** A and T



**Introduction:** Saltmeadow cordgrass is native to the salt marshes of the Atlantic seaboard and the Gulf coast of the United States. It is also found on the eastern shores of Mexico and Central America. Currently populations occur in North America in the known locations: in British Columbia one population near Nanaimo, Washington near Hoodspport, Oregon near Florence, and in California at San Francisco Bay. Saltmeadow cordgrass was introduced into Oregon as packing material for oysters.

**Distribution in Oregon:** Saltmeadow cordgrass is only known to occur in one location in Oregon. The historic site is at Siuslaw Bay, Cox Island. Known to exist on the island since the 1930's. It is currently under management by The Nature Conservancy, the Cox Island site is under active treatment.

**Description:** Saltmeadow cordgrass is a rhizomatous perennial grass 1 to 4 feet tall with very narrow leaf blades 0.5-2 mm wide. The leaves and flowering stems are deciduous being replaced each year. Leaf color is light green, often in contrast to the colors of native tufted hairgrass and sedges. The dark-colored flowering panicles are not taller than the leaves. Infestations grow slowly outward forming patches easily spotted from the air. Reproduction occurs by the release of root fragments during storm events or by seeding. Saltmeadow cordgrass is similar to common cordgrass (*S. anglica*), smooth cordgrass (*S. alterniflora*), and dense-flowered cordgrass (*S. densiflora*). A detailed key is recommended for positive identification.

**Impacts:** Estuarine habitats are some of the most limited and threatened habitats in Oregon. In most bays, over 90% of the original marshes have been filled, diked and developed. *Spartina* species are important salt marsh species to bays and estuaries of the east coast. The associated fauna is adapted to and dependent on *spartina* grasses for shelter and food production. The physical makeup of west coast salt marshes and bays differs by being dominated with extensive areas of open sand and mudflats with smaller areas of marsh. Once established, east coast *Spartina* alter this balance of marsh to mudflat by converting most of the mudflat to high marsh, effecting feeding and nursery areas, migratory bird resting sites, and shellfish production areas. *Spartina patens* can dominate and exclude all native vegetation from the high marsh causing serious reductions in waterfowl food production and plant species diversity. At Cox Island, the rare *Sidalcia hendersonii* is directly threatened by *Spartina* encroachment.

**Biological controls:** Biocontrol agents are not used on "A" listed weeds in Oregon. This weed is being managed for eradication.

