Saltmeadow Cordgrass

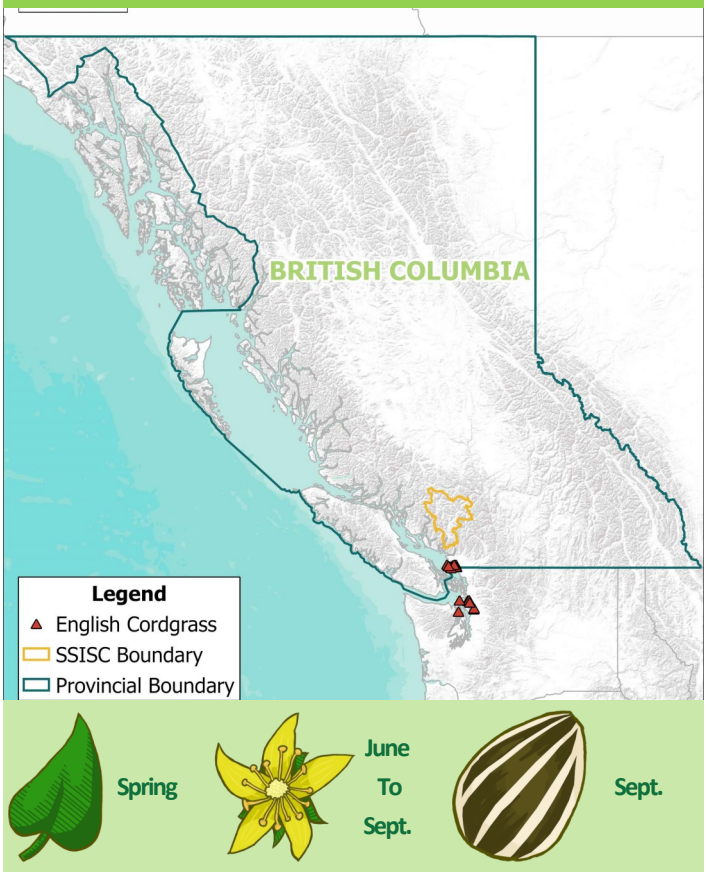
Spartina patens

(AKA Salt Marsh Cordgrass)

FACT SHEET

Squamish: Prevent | Whistler: Prevent | Pemberton: Prevent

DISTRIBUTION



Origin: Saltmeadow Cordgrass is native to the Atlantic Coast of North America and the Gulf coast of the United States.

Habitat: The salt-tolerant species prefers the upper salt marsh tidal zone, but can also establish in sand dunes and sand flats. It thrives in open and exposed sites and tolerates occasional inundations.

Reproduction: Saltmeadow Cordgrass primarily spreads by root fragments, but can also germinate by seed on low sand flats with suitable moisture. When released, seeds can float for up to 26 days and can remain viable until the following spring if they are kept wet and cool.

Interesting Fact: *Spartina* species (which include Saltmeadow Cordgrass) are the only grass species with the adaptations needed to survive in stressful low salt mash environments.

IDENTIFICATION


J. Fenneman

Saltmeadow Cordgrass is a perennial grass (Poaceae family).

Flowers: Droopy spikes (0.7 - 1 cm) of reddish flowers are arranged in an overlapping fashion.

Stems: Are thin and pliant, growing in dense mats up to 1.2 m tall.

Leaves: Are light green, inward-rolled, and narrow, ranging from 1 - 4 mm wide and 10 - 50 cm long. The leaves and flowering stems are deciduous.

Roots: Are long and wiry.

Seeds: Arise only on one side of flower spikes.

Similar Species:

- **Native: Seashore Saltgrass** (*Distichlis spicata*)**, Seaside Arrow-Grass** (*Triglochin maritimum*)**, American Dunegrass** (*Leymus mollis*)**, Seaside Plantain** (*Plantago maritima*).
- **Invasive: Dense-Flowered Cordgrass** (*Spartina densiflora*)**, English Cordgrass** (*Spartina anglica*)**, Smooth Cordgrass** (*Spartina alterniflora*).

Saltmeadow Cordgrass can be extremely challenging to distinguish from other grass species. Accordingly, we recommend the use of a detailed key for positive identification.

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Vectors of Spread: Saltmeadow Cordgrass root fragments and seeds spread primarily by tidal currents, but can also be dispersed by birds, ballast water, dredging, aquaculture and intentional planting for erosion control.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Saltmeadow Cordgrass is not yet found in communities in the Sea to Sky Region, so PREVENTION of spread is key:

- Regularly monitor bodies of water for *Spartina* species.
- Minimize soil disturbances near Saltmeadow Cordgrass plants.
- Be PlantWise and choose alternative non-invasive species.
- Ensure plants (particularly flowering heads or root fragments) are bagged or covered to prevent spread during transport to designated disposal sites (e.g. landfill). **Do NOT compost.**
- Clean, drain, and dry boats and equipment before leaving any water body (to avoid spreading seeds or plant parts). Take extra caution when transporting your boat or other equipment in and out of province.
- Maintain terrestrial, riparian and aquatic environments in a healthy condition to ensure productive natural plant communities.

Saltmeadow Cordgrass is very difficult to control.

- **Mechanical Control:** Mechanical control of Saltmeadow Cordgrass is extremely labour intensive. Early season seedlings can be hand-pulled or excavated. Mowing infestations can help to contain growth, limit seed set, and eventually kill the plants. For long-term results, mowing must be repeated several times each season for up to four years.
- **Chemical Control:** Herbicide treatment is not possible at most sites, due to the plant's habitat. In any case, herbicide use is challenging and complex, and should not be attempted without seeking more information from BC MFLNRORD.
- **Biological Control:** There are currently no biocontrol agents for this species in BC.
- **Cultural Control:** Dikes can confine the lateral spread of rhizomes. Alternatively, they can be used to inundate infestations until plants die.

Due to its limited distribution in BC, Saltmeadow Cordgrass is part of the 'Early Detection & Rapid Response' program in BC.
See www2.gov.bc.ca/invasivespecies for more info.

If you suspect you have found Saltmeadow Cordgrass anywhere in the Sea to Sky region:

Contact the Sea to Sky Invasive Species Council to report and for the most recent, up to date control methods. All reports will be kept confidential.

References: B.C. Spartina Working Group, Coastal Invasive Species Committee, Government of BC, Invasive Plant Atlas, Oregon Department of Agriculture, San Francisco Estuary Invasive Spartina Project, Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board.

IMPACTS

Ecological:

- **Significantly decreases habitat and nursery grounds for birds and fish.**
- **Alters hydrology of an area and disrupts tidal drainage patterns, which can increase flooding.**
- **Excludes native vegetation from the high marsh zone, which creates a monoculture.**

Economic:

- **Negatively impacts coastal-based industries, such as tourism.**

REPORT SIGHTINGS

Visit ssisc.ca/report