

Spartina alterniflora

Smooth Cordgrass

Native to Maine

Coastal
Saltmarsh

Leaves



Sandy Richards



Look for leaves 30 to 50 cm long, narrow, and sharply pointed. They are alternately arranged and often have salt crystals attached to the leaf surface.

LEAF ARRANGEMENT	LEAF TYPE	LEAF/LEAFLET SHAPE	LEAF/LEAFLET EDGE
 ALTERNATE	 SIMPLE	 PALMATE	 SMOOTH
 OPPOSITE	 COMPOUND-PALMATE	 BLADE	 TOOTHED
 WHORLED	 COMPOUND-PINNATE	 ROUND	 WAVY

Plant



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Look for a tall (2 to 3 m) thick grass, with narrow shaggy stalks.

Stem



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Look for stems that are round and hollow, about 13 mm wide. Smooth Cordgrass stems are spongy at the base. There can be 5 to 30 spikes at the tip of the plant.

Seasonal Change



Sandy Richards



In the summer (July to September) look for small white flowers hanging from the spikes like tiny socks.

Similar Species

Smooth Cordgrass is easily confused with native Salt Hay. Smooth Cordgrass is taller, grows straight up, and is much more rigid. Smooth Cordgrass is more salt-tolerant than Salt Hay, and often found in lower marsh zones. Salt Hay is found in the upper marsh zones.

Fun Fact

Smooth Cordgrass leaves often have salt crystals on them. The spongy base of the stalk absorbs salt water. When the salt water transpires, it leaves behind the salt crystals. The roots of smooth cordgrass are an important food source for Snow geese.

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