

Common Salt Marsh Plants of the Gulf of Mexico

Sawgrass - *Cladium jamaicense*, is a large sedge. It grows in fresh and brackish-water swamps and marshes, and along lake shores throughout Florida. It also can grow well on dry ground. Saw-grass stems typically grow to 6 or 7 feet tall from stout, short runners. Saw-grass leaves grow from the base and lower stem of the plant. The grey-green leaves are very long, typically 3 feet, and they are stiff and tough. They are flat to v-shaped and relatively narrow: about 1/2 to 3/4 inch wide. Both leaf margins and the underside midrib have cutting saw teeth.



Black Needlerush (*Juncus roemerianus*) comprises the largest vegetative zone and the bulk of the biomass in most salt marshes on the northeast Gulf Coast. Black needlerush is found in a small elevation range, but can span one hundred meters to several miles wide.

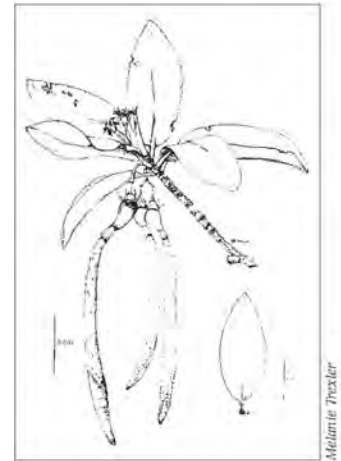


Smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) forms a border along open water in salt marshes. On a broad gentle slope, smooth cordgrass occupies a monospecific band 1 to 10 meters wide; greater slopes lead to mixing of smooth cordgrass and needlerush at upper elevations.



Common Mangrove Trees of the Gulf of Mexico

Worldwide, as many as 50 or more species of mangroves exist. Of the three species found in Florida, the **Red Mangrove, *Rhizophora mangle***, is found closest to the water and is probably the best known. The Red Mangrove is easily identified by its tangled, arching roots called “prop roots.” The growth of these roots has earned red mangroves the title “walking trees” because they creep into new areas by branching roots.



The **Black Mangrove, *Avicennia germinans***, often occurs in shallower water landward of the Red Mangrove zone. The Black Mangrove can be identified by numerous finger-like projections, called pneumatophores, that protrude from the soil around the tree’s trunk and help with root aeration and gas exchange.



The **White Mangrove, *Laguncularia racemosa***, usually occupies higher intertidal elevations than the Red or Black Mangroves do. Unlike the other species, the white mangrove usually has no visible aerial root systems. The easiest way to identify the white mangrove is by the leaves. They are elliptical, yellow-green, often notched at the tip, and have two opposite sugar glands (nectaries) on the leaf stalk (petiole) at the base of the leaf blade. Salt glands are located in small depressions on the leaf blade.



Common Seagrasses of the Gulf of Mexico

Turtle grass (*Thalassia testudinum*) the largest of the Florida seagrasses, has deeper root structures than any of the other seagrasses. It has large ribbon-like leaves that are 4-12 mm wide and 10-35 mm cm long.



Manatee grass (*Syringodium filiforme*) is easily recognizable because its leaves are cylindrical instead of ribbon-like and flat like many other seagrass species. The thin leaves are up to half a meter long.



Shoal grass (*Halodule wrightii*) is an early colonizer of vegetated areas and usually grows in water too shallow for other species except widgeon grass (a brackish water species).



Common Macroalgae of the Gulf of Mexico



Peacock Algae
Padina vickersiae



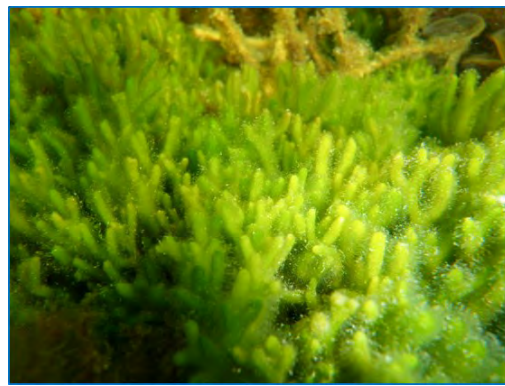
Gulfweed
Sargassum filipendula



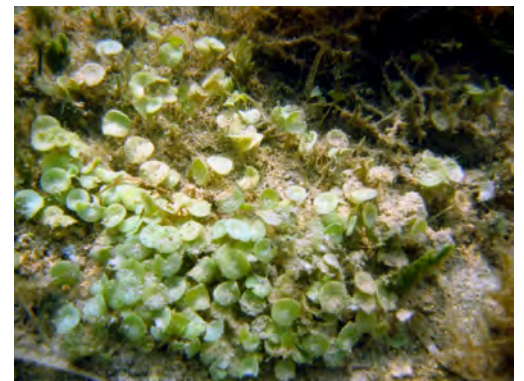
Edible Red Algae
Gracilaria parvispora



Fuzzy Red Algae
Digenia simplex



Dead Man's Fingers
Codium isthmocladum



Mermaid's umbrella
Acetabularia calyculus



Mermaid's Shaving Brush
Penicillus capitatus



Mermaid's Fan
Udotea flabellum



Cactus Algae
Halimeda incrassata