

Spartina alterniflora

COMMON NAMES

American spartina

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Robust perennial clump forming grass to 1m. **Rhizomes** thick, fleshy, far-creeping, forming open clumps. **Culm** erect, 8–30 mm diameter near base, including closely ensheathing leaves. **Leaves** 8–45 cm × 6–15 mm, persistent, coriaceous, flat, glabrous, adaxially ribbed, much narrowed to fine hard tip. **Flowers** rarely seen.

SIMILAR TAXA

Can be distinguished from other *Spartina* species by the rather open clumps, large shoots (8–30 mm diameter), occasional plants flowering, and on those that do, the spikelets is not hairy.

HABITAT

Aquatic: Emergent. Saline. Estuaries, mangroves and other intertidal zones with soft sediment.

GENUS

Spartina

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Spartina alterniflora Loisel.

SYNONYMS

Sporobolus alterniflorus (Loisel.) P.M.Peterson & Saarela

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

N/A

YEAR NATURALISED

1965

ORIGIN

N. America

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Agricultural

TOLERANCES

The plant is intolerant to shade and drought; tolerant to poor drainage and highly tolerant of salt. Physical damage and grazing result in the resprouting of underground rhizomes (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995).



LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Perennial. Flowers are hardly ever seen (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). Vegetative reproduction from underground rhizomes, seed not produced (ibid.). Rhizome fragments survive digging, dropped pieces resprout (ibid.)

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

NVS CODE

SPAALT

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Timmins SM, Mackenzie IW. 1995. Weeds in New Zealand Protected Natural Areas database. *Department of Conservation Technical Series 8*. Department of Conservation, Wellington, NZ. 282 p.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/spartina-alterniflora/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026