



SMOOTH CORDGRASS

Spartina alterniflora



- ✦ Common Names: Salt-marsh cordgrass, oyster grass, and saltwater cordgrass
- ✦ Smooth cordgrass is a Class B Designate noxious weed.
- ✦ Smooth cordgrass is a rhizomatous perennial grass in the Gramineae Family and spreads aggressively by seeds, rhizomes and vegetative fragments.
- ✦ This long-lived warm season perennial typically grows from 2 to 7 feet tall and spreads extensively by long hollow rhizomes. Soft spongy stems of up to ½ inch in diameter emerge from the rhizomes. The flat leaf blades are from 12 to 20 inches

long and tapered to a long inward-rolled tip. In Sept. and Oct. seed heads emerge at the end of the stem and are 10 to 12 inches long. Each spike will hold from 12 to 15 two or three inch spikelets. There are approximately 175,000 seeds per pound.

- ✦ Smooth cordgrass is an aggressive exotic salt marsh plant. It is highly invasive and considered to be one of the most aggressive weeds worldwide. It displaces native species, destroys habitat and food sources for fish, waterfowl and other marine life. It also interferes with recreational activities.

- ✦ It is found growing in intertidal zones, where it colonizes mud or sand-

flats in saline or brackish water. Because of its ability to trap sediment, *Spartina*



species have the potential to change the fundamental nature of portions of Washington's coastline. A secondary impact of this increased sediment may be changes in water circulation patterns, reducing tidal flow and leading to increased flooding at, or in the mouths of rivers.



A stand of *S. alterniflora* at Whale's Tail Marsh, CA Fish and Game, Hayward, Alameda County. Photo courtesy of Erik Grijalva, Invasive *Spartina* Project, 2003.

CONTROL OPTIONS

- ✦ Some cultural control methods, such as diking, have shown moderate success in controlling the spread.



- ✦ Seedlings can be pulled out effectively, as long as care is taken to remove both shoots and roots.
- ✦ Mowing infestations can contain growth, and eventually kill the plants. Small clones must be mowed up to 2 or 3 times beginning with initial spring green-up and continued till they die back in the fall. Larger clones need to be mowed 9 to 10 times over two seasons for eradication.
- ✦ Covering small *Spartina* clones with woven geotextile fabric has been demonstrated to be successful in some areas. The plants are mown to ground level and covered out 3 or 4 feet beyond the edges of the infestation. The covering must be anchored firmly in place and left for one or two growing seasons.
- ✦ Since Smooth Cordgrass is found in marshes and along shorlines, the use of an herbicide formulated for aquatic settings is required. **Please note that aquatic herbicides are restricted for use in Washington State to licensed applicators only.**



Flowering *S. alterniflora* at Cooley Landing, SF Bay National Wildlife Refuge, San Mateo County, July 2003. Photo courtesy of Erik Grijalva, Invasive *Spartina* Project, 2003.

