

Common cord grass

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Species Description

Scientific name: *Spartina anglica*

AKA: Smooth cord grass, rice grass

Native: England

Habitat: Estuarine and coastal habitats, wetlands.

S. anglica is a vigorous perennial grass that occupies the intertidal zone of coastal and estuarine habitats, but can also colonise other areas such as saltmarsh and sand dunes.

Hollow stems (at least 5mm in diameter), grow to a height of 30-130cm. Leaves are green or greyish-green, with overlapping sheaths. Blades are 10-45cm long, 6-15mm wide; flat or inrolled upwards, firm, smooth, and comes to a fine hard point. Leaves have ligules (outgrowth near leaf base) that consist of a fringe of hairs. Flowers are inconspicuous and colourless, and occur in numerous, erect, contracted panicles (loose branching cluster of flowers), which consist of closely overlapping spikelets in two rows on one side of the rachis (stem).

S. anglica developed in the south coast of England after the introduction of the invasive non-native species *S. alterniflora*. *S. anglica* can be spread vegetatively or by seed, with a range of natural dispersal mechanisms such as tidal currents, wind, shipping and birds. However most of the populations around the world are from intentional introductions.

Due to the extensive rhizome (root network) and upright stems, *S. anglica* is highly valued species for land-reclamation and coastal defence schemes in the early 20th century. This has resulted in extensive mono-specific swards.

S. anglica out competes and displaces native vegetation, reducing food source for native species. It also alters sediment composition impacting the distribution of invertebrate prey for birds and fish. The tall and dense structure can reduce visibility and communication which can increase predation risk of feeding flocks.

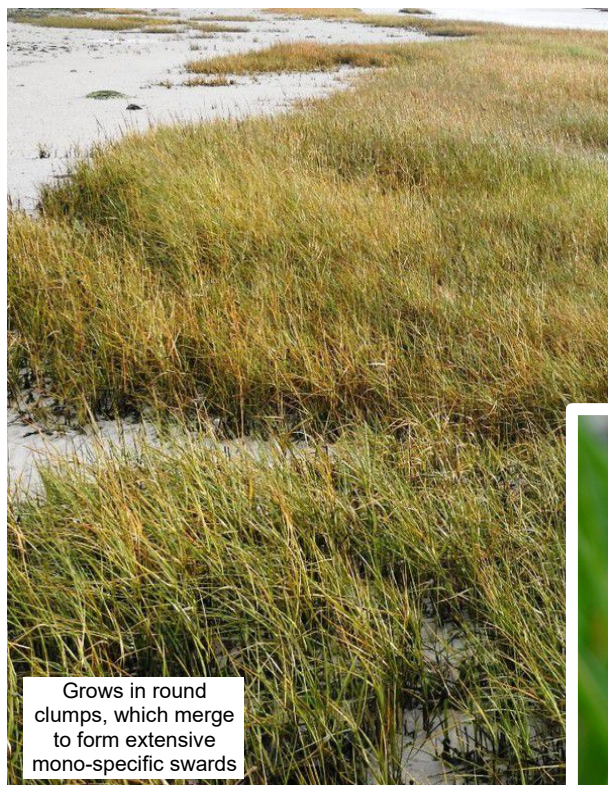


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Key ID Features



Grows in round clumps, which merge to form extensive mono-specific swards

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Up to 130cm in height

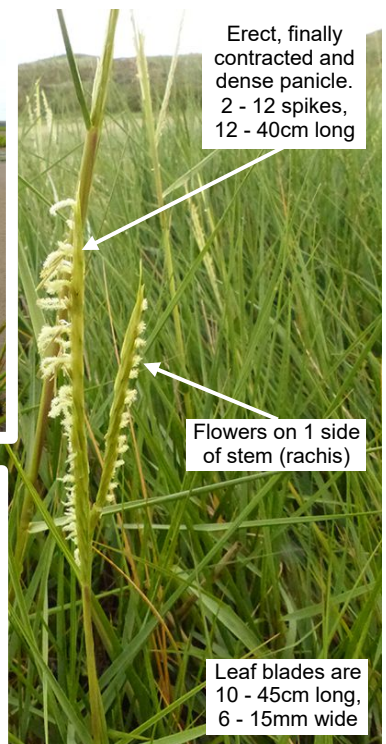


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Flowers in 2 rows of overlapping spikelets

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Erect, finally contracted and dense panicle. 2 - 12 spikes, 12 - 40cm long

Flowers on 1 side of stem (rachis)

Leaf blades are 10 - 45cm long, 6 - 15mm wide

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Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>, iRecord app or Invasive Species Northern Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/report-sighting>

Similar Species

Small cord grass

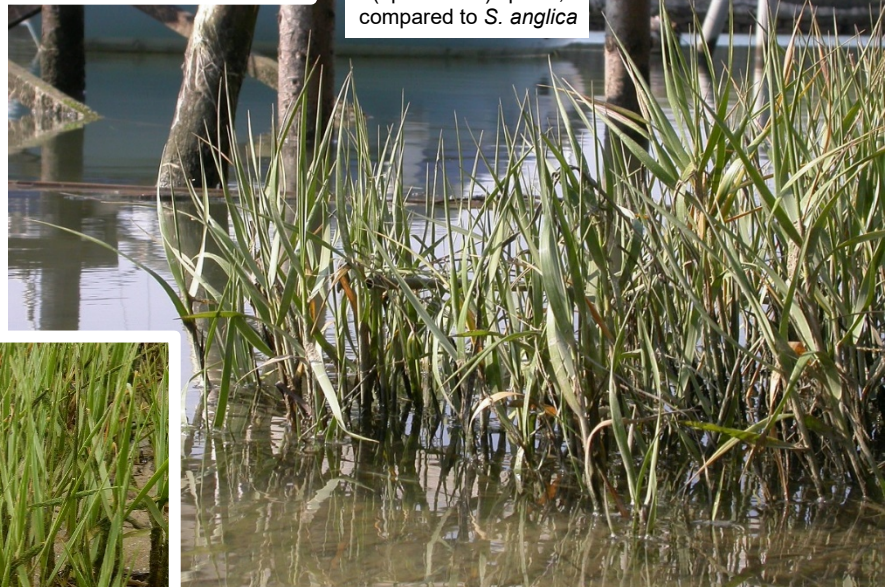
Native
Spartina maritima



Short than *S. anglica*
(20 – 70cm in height)

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<http://www.freenatureimages.eu/plants/Flora%20S-Z/Spartina%20maritima/index.html>

The inflorescence is a group of 2 or 3 unbranched spikes up to 15 cm long, each with several unstalked, one-flowered, downy spikelets about 1.25 cm long, which are produced on all sides of the stalk.



Less (2 or 3) and shorter
(up to 15cm) spikes,
compared to *S. anglica*

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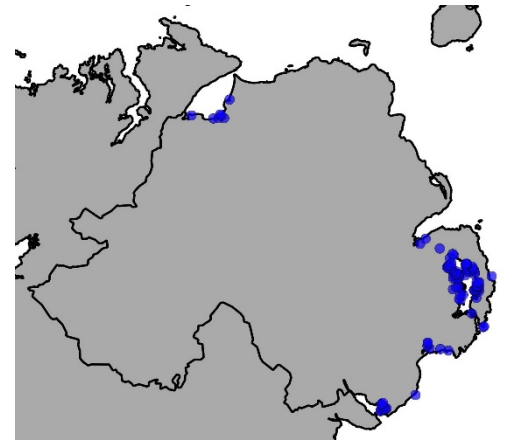


Slender leaves
10 -40 cm long,
0.5 - 1 cm wide
at the base

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Distribution

Present in Strangford Lough, Carlingford Lough, Dundrum and Lough Foyle.



Source: NBN atlas Northern Ireland
<https://northernireland-species.nbnatlas.org/search/?q=spartina+anglica>
Check website for current distribution

References and further reading:

- CABI *Spartina anglica* (common cordgrass) data sheet - <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/107739>
- IUCN GISD datasheet *Spartina anglica* <http://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/species.php?sc=76>
- Lacambra, C., Cutts, N., Allen, J., Burd, F. & Elliott, M. 2004. *Spartina anglica*: a review of its status, dynamics and management. English Nature. Available <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/127023>
- Nehring, S. and Adsersen, H. (2006): NOBANIS – Invasive Alien Species Fact Sheet – *Spartina anglica*. – From: Online Database of the European Network on Invasive Alien Species. Available https://www.nobanis.org/globalassets/speciesinfo/s/spartina-anglica/spartina_anglica.pdf

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