

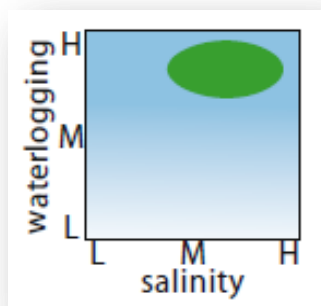
Sporobolus virginicus

Salt Couch, Marine Couch

Salt Couch, *Sporobolus virginicus*, is a sturdy, spiky grass that grows in coastal saltmarshes, occupying rises between mangroves and Swamp Oaks (*Casuarina* spp.). Mangroves are flooded twice daily at high tide; saltmarsh tends to be flooded only at the highest tides;

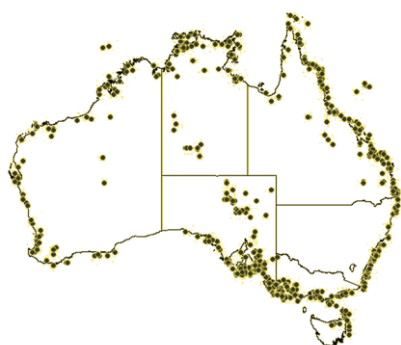


Swamp Oaks grow just above high tide level and are rarely inundated.



From: Sustainable Grazing on Saline Land, SALTdeck Series

Salt Couch grows higher than its shoreline companion, the succulent Samphire (*Sarcocornia quinqueflora*) but still has to cope with high levels of salinity, especially when evaporation rates are high. With its C4 photosynthetic metabolism, it fixes CO₂ efficiently and conserves water, giving it an advantage in the hot, high-light environment of saltmarshes, which is locked in perpetual 'osmotic drought'.



Salt Couch grows right around Australia, and also in many saline habitats throughout Central Australia. It's distributed worldwide, throughout tropical and warmer temperate areas of the world. It is used for dune reclamation, coastline protection, for grazing, even as an

alternative to lawn grass on saline, intermittently waterlogged soils where so few plants can grow.

Salt Couch is an interesting species genetically. A study which investigated its potential as a turf grass, discovered that specimens from northern NSW were tetraploid, those from southern NSW diploid, and that hybrid, triploid populations occurred in between. One specimen, a triploid from the Coila River in southern NSW, was finally selected as being the most suitable¹.

¹ A R Smith-White, Australian Flora Foundation:

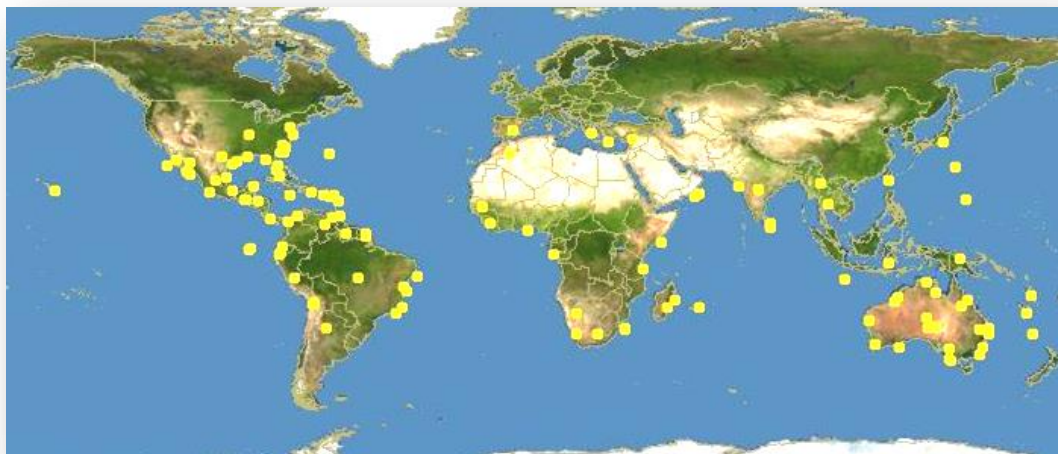
http://www.aff.org.au/SmithWhite_Sporobolus_final.pdf

Australian Distribution: map modified from: Australias Virtual Herbarium

<http://avh.ala.org.au/occurrences/search?taxa=Sporobolus+virginicus#mapView>

World Distribution Map: modified from Encyclopedia of Life,

http://eol.org/data_objects/21451707



Alison Downing, Brian Atwell, Kevin Downing, Muhammad Masood & Ray Duell

Department of Biological Sciences, 17th June 2013

MACQUARIE
UNIVERSITY
SYDNEY - AUSTRALIA



FACULTY OF SCIENCE