This basic field guide illustrates the most common plants in Virginia’s tidal salt marshes where the salinity range is between 10-25 ppt. Salt marsh vegetation is divided into zones based on the extent of tidal inundation. Each plant’s location in the marsh is indicated by the color that matches the zonation depicted in the cross-section. The most recognizable feature of each plant is also featured with illustrations and photographs.
Densely overlapping spikelets borne only on one side of axis

Leaves in-rolled, not 2-ranked

**Spartina alterniflora** (Smooth Cordgrass)

1-8 ft  **August - October**

**Spartina cynosuroides** (Big Cordgrass)

up to 10 ft  **July - September**

Round, sharply-pointed, dark green leaves

Round stem

**Juncus roemerianus** (Black Needle Rush)

up to 3 ft.  **April - October**

**Scirpus robustus** (Salt Marsh Bulrush)

2-3 ft  **July - October**

Terminal spike inflorescence

2-ranked leaves

**Spartina patens** (Salt Meadow Hay)

1-3 ft  **July - September**

**Distichlis spicata** (Salt Grass)

8-16 in  **July - September**
**Limonium spp. (Sea Lavender)**
- 2-6 ft
- July - October

**Aster tenuifolius (Salt Marsh Aster)**
- 1-4 ft
- July - September

**Iva frutescens (Marsh Elder)**
- 2-6 ft
- August - October

**Baccharis halimifolia (Groundsel Tree)**
- up to 8 ft
- September - October

**Panicum virgatum (Switch Grass)**
- up to 3 ft
- July - September

**Solidago sempervirens (Seaside Goldenrod)**
- 4-5 ft
- August - October
Borrichia frutescens (Sea Oxeye)

- Succulent, round stems with scale-like leaves
- Up to 3 ft
- July - September

Salicornia spp. (Glasswort)

- Fleshy, arrow-shaped, alternate leaves
- 4-20 in
- July - November

Atriplex patula (Orach Spearscale or Marsh Orach)

- Opposite, fleshy leaves
- 2-ranked, wide, bluish-green leaves
- Up to 4 ft
- July - September

Phragmites australis (Phragmites or Reed Grass)

- Opposite, leaves with dense hairs
- Showy, pink, hibiscus-like flowers
- Alternately arranged
- 6-14 ft
- September - October

Kosteletzkya virginica (Marsh Mallow)

- Opposite, fleshy leaves
- Showy, large, white, hibiscus flowers
- 2-3 ft
- July - August

Hibiscus moscheutos (Marsh Hibiscus/Rose Mallow)

- Opposite, fleshy leaves
- Showy, large, white, hibiscus flowers
- 2-ranked, wide, bluish-green leaves
- Up to 12 ft
- July - September

All illustrations in this brochure by Abigail Rorer from *Field Guide to Coastal Wetland Plants of the Southeastern United States*, Ralph W. Tiner, 1987, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, MA. 328 pp. This book is recommended reading for an easy-to-use field guide to over 400 plants found in tidal wetlands of the Southeast, with more than 250 plants illustrated. It includes species found in the following habitats: tidal aquatic beds, salt and brackish marshes, salt flats, mangrove swamps, and tidal freshwater marshes and swamps. Simple keys guide the reader in identification of these species. An overview of coastal wetland ecology is also presented along with information on and figures showing the general distribution of coastal wetlands along the South Atlantic and Gulf Coasts (Virginia to Texas).