G10 GRASS





## MARINE COUCH Sporobolus virginicus

SALTdeck Series

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Alternative names: Sand Couch, Salt Couch, Saltwater Couch.

Family: Poaceae.

**Description:** Creeping rhizomatous and stoloniferous perennial to 50 cm tall. Characterised by two rows of sharp stiff leaves on opposite sides of the same flat plane (see photo). Ligule a rim of hairs (see photo). Flowers mostly early summer through to autumn but does not always set viable seed. *Sporobolus virginicus* var. *virginicus* has leaves 3–5 mm wide whereas the fine-leaved form *S. virginicus* var. *minor* has leaves generally less than 2 mm wide.

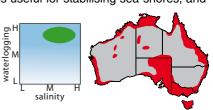
**Key features:** Tight spike to 10 cm long and 1 cm wide with tiny florets (flowers) 2–4 mm long. Seedhead projected above the leaves. Scattered tubercle (wart on base of hair) hairs on leaf sheath.

**Value:** The narrow-leaved forms can provide useful grazing but the coarse broad-leaved forms have much lower forage value. It is an important grazing plant for cattle during the dry season in northern Australia. Little is known about its grazing management.

**Salinity and waterlogging tolerance:** High tolerance to waterlogging and moderate to high tolerance to salinity as it thrives in frequently tidally inundated saltmarsh and is useful for stabilising sea-shores, and an ecologically important component of tidal saltmarsh.

**Notes:** Native of all States. Common along the Australian coastline. Inland records probably refer to the closely related *S. mitchellii* which is less tolerant to waterlogging and salinity.

**References:** Flora of NSW, Harden (ed), Vol. 4, 1993. Flora of Victoria, Walsh and Entwisle (eds), Vol. 2, 1994. Saltland Pastures in Australia, Barrett-Lennard, 2003.



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