Merimbula saltmarsh checklist

Common name	Scientific name	Family
Trees and shrubs		
Austral Seablite	*Suaeda australis*	Chenopodiaceae
Bracelet Honey-myrtle	*Melaleuca armillaris*	Myrtaceae
Grey Mangrove	*Avicennia marina ssp australasica*	Acanthaceae
River Mangrove	*Aegiceras corniculatum*	Primulaceae
Coastal Saltbush	*Rhagodia candolleana*	Chenopodiaceae
Shrubby Glasswort	*Tecticornia arbuscula*	Chenopodiaceae
Forbs		
Angled Lobelia	*Lobelia anceps*	Campanulaceae
Beach Saltbush	*Atriplex australasica*	Chenopodiaceae
Coast Buttons	*Leptinella longipes*	Asteraceae
Creeping Brookweed	*Samolus repens*	Theophrastaceae
Grass Daisy	*Brachyscome graminea*	Asteraceae
New Zealand Spinach	*Tetragonia tetragonoides*	Aizoaceae
Pigface	*Carpobrotus glaucescens*	Aizoaceae
Round-leaved Pigface	*Disphyma crassifolium ssp clavellatum*	Aizoaceae
Tasmanian Sandspurry	*Spergularia tasmanica*	Caryophyllaceae
Samphire, Glasswort	*Sarcocornia quinqueflora ssp quinqueflora*	Chenopodiaceae
Sea Celery	*Apium prostratum*	Apiaceae
Sea Lavender	*Limonium australe*	Plumbaginaceae
Swamp Weed	*Selliera radicans*	Goodeniaceae
Water Buttons	*Cotula coronopifolia*	Asteraceae
Grasses, rushes and sedges		
Bare Twig-rush	*Baumea juncea*	Cyperaceae
Chaffy Saw Sedge	*Gahnia filum*	Cyperaceae
Coast Speargrass	*Austrostipa stipoides*	Poaceae
Common Reed	*Phragmites australis*	Poaceae
Green Couch	*Cynodon dactylon*	Poaceae
Knobby Club-sedge	*Ficinia nodosa*	Cyperaceae
Nodding Club-sedge	*Isolepis cernua*	Cyperaceae
Prickly Couch	*Zoysia macrantha*	Poaceae
Saltwater Couch	*Sporobolus virginicus*	Poaceae
Sea Rush	*Juncus kraussii*	Juncaceae
Streaked Arrowgrass	*Triglochin striatum*	Juncaginaceae
Toad Rush	*Juncus bufonius*	Juncaceae

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The ecological values of saltmarsh

Coastal saltmarshes provide a buffer between the sea and the land. They stabilise and filter shore sediments, store carbon, cycle nutrients and support estuarine food chains.

Micro-organisms like cyanobacteria, diatoms and algae are important components of the ecosystem. Many invertebrates also live in the community, including worms, crabs, molluscs, spiders and insects. Saltmarsh provides feeding habitat for fish, shrimp and prawns during high tides and for insectivorous bats at night. Shorebirds like the threatened Pied Oystercatcher and Sanderling use saltmarshes for feeding and high tide roosting.

About the Merimbula Lake Boardwalk

The Merimbula Lake Boardwalk is 1.7 kilometres long, running west from the bridge on Market Street. It is the most southerly mangrove boardwalk in Australia and the highest latitude mangrove boardwalk in the world. The Boardwalk was built by the Bega Valley Shire Council and State Government with Commonwealth assistance. There are toilets and a shop at the western end. Some other accessible saltmarshes in the region are at Pambula wetland ('Panboola') and Bermagui.

More information

National Parks Visitor Centre cnr Merimbula Drive and Sapphire Coast Drive, Merimbula ph 6495 5000

South East Local Land Services
Roof Top Level/106 Auckland St Bega NSW 2550 ph 6491 8200

NSW Fisheries, Far South Coast Fisheries Office
13 Cocora Street, Eden ph 6496 1377,
www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/habitat/aquatic-habitats

Panboola - Pambula Wetlands Heritage Project
http://thebegavalley.org.au/panboola.html

Coastal saltmarsh endangered ecological community profiles
NSW: www.threatenedspecies.environment.nsw.gov.au
Commonwealth: www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/communities

Saintilan, N. ed. (2009) Australian Saltmarsh Ecology, CSIRO

Bega Valley Shire Council

NSW GOVERNMENT | Southern Rivers CMA CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

NSW NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

nswnationalparks.com.au

plants of the Merimbula Lake saltmarsh

Coastal saltmarsh is a rare vegetation community with specialised and fascinating plant life.

There are fine examples of saltmarsh around Merimbula Lake, and the Merimbula Boardwalk is a great way to see them. This brochure introduces the main plant species in the Merimbula saltmarsh.

About saltmarsh

Coastal saltmarsh is a wetland community of the upper intertidal zone of estuaries, bays, lakes and lagoons. At Merimbula, it occurs in a belt between Grey Mangroves and Honey Myrtle scrub.

Saltmarsh is a mosaic of rushbeds, sedgelands, grasslands, herbfields, chenopod shrublands and salt pans.

Samphire, often with shrubs and mangrove seedlings, occupies the lowest and most saline parts of the community. Salt-tolerant rushes, sedges and grasses grow in the upper saltmarsh.

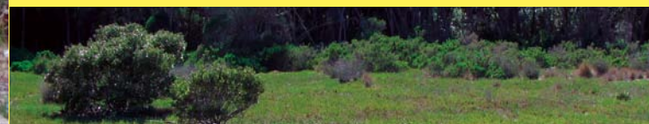
Saltmarsh plants have to cope with sea water during high tides, and fresh water during heavy rain, as well as long dry periods. They are 'halophytes', surviving in extremely saline soil conditions. These plants load their tissues with ions to maintain cell pressure, keeping salt out of their sap flow.

Some use succulent leaves and stems to reduce their uptake of salty water. Plants like Grey Mangrove and Sea Lavender have special glands which excrete salt.

The community often contains a range of plant species, although from just a handful of families. Many species are endemic to saltmarsh (they grow nowhere else).

Unlike other communities, plant diversity in saltmarsh increases with distance from the equator. Some saltmarsh plants are found all over the world. Others, like Sea Rush and Samphire, originated in Gondwana and are also found in New Zealand, South Africa and South America.

Merimbula has lost a third of its saltmarsh in the last 50 years. Saltmarsh is still threatened by infilling, weeds, vehicles, grazing, pollution, encroaching mangroves, as well as rising sea levels caused by climate change. Coastal Saltmarsh is listed as an Endangered Ecological Community under NSW and Commonwealth legislation, and is also protected under State fisheries legislation.



River Mangrove
Aegiceras corniculatus
FAMILY: PRIMULACEAE
A shrub with alternate leaves dotted with salt glands. It flowers from spring to early summer. Pores on the trunk ('lenticels') are used to obtain oxygen. It prefers less saline conditions, and is at its southern limit right here.

Grey Mangrove
Avicennia marina
FAMILY: ACANTHACEAE
A small tree with opposite leaves and aerial roots ('pneumatophores'). It flowers mainly in autumn. Like the unrelated River Mangrove, the seed germinates on the parent plant before falling.

Creeping Brookweed
Samolus repens
FAMILY: THEOPHRASTACEAE
An erect or creeping herb with narrow leaves and white or pale pink flowers in Sept-April. It is the dominant herb in some areas, often growing with Samphire. It is also found in New Zealand and South America (Chile).

Water Buttons
Cotula coronopifolia
FAMILY: ASTERACEAE
An erect or spreading annual with toothed or entire, slightly fleshy leaves. It was thought to be introduced but is now considered native and one of the species originating in Gondwana. The showy flowers appear mainly in spring.

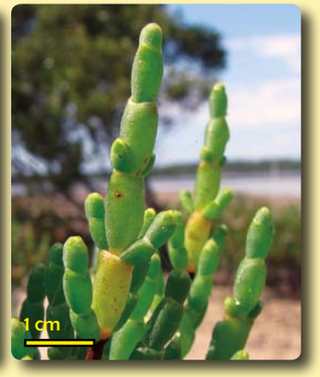
Sea Lavender
Limonium australe
FAMILY: PLUMBAGINACEAE
A tall perennial herb with a rosette of large basal leaves (see inset). It flowers in summer and is a rare species in NSW, restricted to the south coast. Other Limonium species are used for dyeing and cut flowers ("Statice").

New Zealand Spinach
Tetragonia tetragonoides
FAMILY: AIZOACEAE
A spreading annual or short-lived perennial with large slightly fleshy triangular leaves, flowering spring-summer. It is widespread in Australia and New Zealand and was widely used as a green vegetable by early settlers.

Beaded Glasswort, Samphire
Sarcocornia quinqueflora
FAMILY: CHENOPODIACEAE
A perennial herb with succulent, jointed and nearly leafless branches. It is dominant in the lower saltmarsh, tolerating prolonged inundation. It sheds the tiny leaf bases to remove excess salt.

Austral Seablite
Suaeda australis
FAMILY: CHENOPODIACEAE
A shrub to one metre high with succulent green to purple leaves, flowers in short axillary or terminal inflorescences and a small, succulent fruit perianth. It is a dominant shrub over large areas in some saltmarshes.

Bracelet Honey-myrtle
Melaleuca armillaris
FAMILY: MYRTACEAE
A tall shrub to 5 metres high with linear curved leaves and dense white flower spikes. It dominates the estuarine wetland scrub which intergrades with saltmarsh along the Boardwalk. Honey-myrtle flowers in summer.



Shrubby Glasswort
Tecticornia arbuscula
FAMILY: CHENOPODIACEAE
A medium shrub with succulent, jointed branches and reduced leaves. The tiny terminal flowers appear in autumn in groups of three. In NSW, the species is restricted to saltmarshes south from Jervis Bay.

Angled Lobelia
Lobelia anceps
FAMILY: CAMPANULACEAE
A sprawling herb with linear leaves and angled branches with wings formed from the leaf bases. The solitary flowers appear Nov-July, and have the corolla tube split to the base. It is abundant at the eastern end of the Boardwalk.

Shiny Swamp-mat
Selliera radicans
FAMILY: GOODENIACEAE
A prostrate herb with glossy linear or spoon-shaped leaves. It copes with prolonged inundation and dominates the groundcover in some areas. The fan-type flowers appear spring-summer, particularly after inundation.

Pigface
Carpobrotus glaucescens
FAMILY: AIZOACEAE
A prostrate perennial with opposite succulent leaves triangular in cross-section and with visible glands. It favours beach strand vegetation but occurs in transitional areas of the Merimbula saltmarsh. The pulp of the ripe fruit is edible.

Round-leaved Pigface
Disphyma crassifolium ssp clavellatum
FAMILY: AIZOACEAE
A mat-forming herb with opposite succulent leaves rounded in cross-section, and dry fruit. It is uncommon in the region. This is the only Disphyma species and it is endemic to Australia.

Grass Daisy
Brachyscome graminea
FAMILY: ASTERACEAE
A perennial herb with narrow stem leaves. The flowers are white, pale blue or pink, sometimes coloured only on the underside of the 'petals'. It flowers most of the year, and grows in wet grassy areas.

Tasmanian Sandspurry
Spergularia tasmanica
FAMILY: CARYOPHYLLACEAE
An erect pink-flowered herb with glandular hairs on the sepals and opposite narrow fleshy leaves. It flowers spring-autumn. Similar to introduced Sandspurry species, it differs by having wings around the seeds.