

Spartina anglica



Invasive aquatic plant found in B.C.

What is it?

Spartina anglica is a grass that is not native to the West Coast. It can grow rapidly in intertidal zones – such as mudflats and beaches – and disrupt saltwater ecosystems, threaten fish and bird habitat and increase the threat of floods. *Spartina anglica* was discovered in the summer of 2003 in Boundary Bay and Roberts Bank, near the Fraser River estuary.

What's the problem?

Four species of *Spartina*, commonly known as cordgrasses, have invaded coastal estuaries of the U.S. Pacific coast. As these species proliferate, they trap sediment with their large root masses, raise the elevation of the intertidal areas and replace natural mud and sand flats, native eelgrass and algae beds, and river channels. The plants can be brought to B.C. by birds, animals, humans, water currents, recreational boats and ships' ballast water. The results can be serious:

- A loss of critical rearing habitat for fish such as juvenile salmon, clams, oysters and crab.
- A loss of valuable habitat for migrating shorebirds and waterfowl. Boundary Bay is a major resting and feeding area for more than 320 bird species.
- An increase in the risk of flooding.
- A loss of water access from shoreline areas and beaches and for boats.

What does it look like?

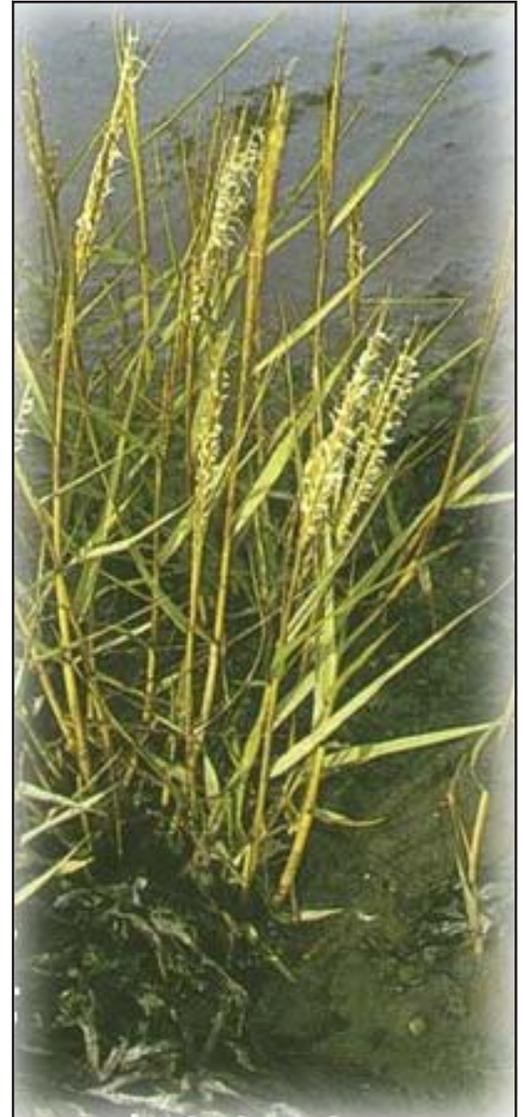
Spartina anglica is a grass, with round, hollow stems that grow in roundish clumps up to 2 m in height. The leaf blades, up to 12 mm wide, are flat, rough and green-gray in colour, and branch out from the stem at almost perpendicular angles. It sprouts in the spring, and blooms from July through November. The seeds resemble wheat and are found on one side of the stem.

What is being done?

The best way to control *Spartina anglica* is to catch it early, before infestations become established. Fisheries and Oceans Canada is working with the Vancouver Port Authority, Ducks Unlimited, Canadian Wildlife Service, Corporation of Delta and B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection to control the plant's spread. The partners are consulting with Washington State, which has been aggressively battling the noxious weed since 1999. For the summer of 2004, comprehensive surveys of Boundary Bay and Roberts Bank are planned. Work crews will be digging up the identified *Spartina anglica* plants and disposing of them.

What can you do?

Volunteers are needed to raise awareness of *Spartina anglica*, to watch shoreline areas for its spread and to participate in removal efforts.



**For further information,
please contact:**

Pat Lim
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
604-666-6529
limp@pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca



Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

Pêches et Océans
Canada

Canada