

Natural Communities of Maritime Ecoregion

Adapted with permission from Edwards, L., Ambrose, J., & Kirkman, L. K. (2013). Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Seven natural communities are separated into three categories: sparsely vegetated or unvegetated intertidal communities, upland and isolated wetland communities, and tidal marshes and swamps. Characteristic plants in each community are listed in the chart below.

Sparsely Vegetated or Unvegetated Intertidal Communities include the following natural community.

- **Intertidal Beaches, Sand Bars, and Mud Flats:** These essentially unvegetated intertidal communities with a substrate of unconsolidated sand or mud are found on ocean-facing edges of barrier islands, in estuaries, and in nearshore marine environments.

Upland and Isolated Wetland Communities include the following natural communities.

- **Maritime Dunes:** These sparsely vegetated herbaceous and woodland communities occur on exposed sand dunes, swales,
- **Maritime Forests:** These upland communities include a variety of mixed pine-evergreen hardwood forests and woodlands found in coastal settings, including barrier islands, back-barrier islands (marsh hammocks), and low ridges and bluffs near the coast. Canopy dominants may include several species of oaks (especially live oak), longleaf pine, pond pine, slash pine, southern red cedar, and cabbage palmetto.
- **Interdunal Wetlands:** Swamps or open-water wetlands typically found in flats and depressions between dune ridges on Georgia's coastal barrier islands. Depending on their location on the barrier island, they may be surrounded by maritime forest or by grass- or shrub-dominated maritime dune communities. They also occur in some near-coastal mainland settings where relict dune structures persist. They are also known as "freshwater sloughs" or "barrier island ponds."

Tidal Marshes and Swamps include the following natural communities. Characteristic plants in each community are listed in the chart below.

- **Salt Marshes and Brackish Tidal Marshes:** Marshes occur along the edges of tidal rivers, estuaries, and sounds, and on the mainland-facing sides of barrier islands. They are dominated by grasses, rushes, sedges, and forbs that are inundated regularly by salty tidal waters. By far the most abundant plant is smooth cordgrass. Other characteristic plants include black needlerush, sea lavender, seaside oxeye, saltgrass, and maritime marsh-elder.

- **Freshwater and Oligohaline Tidal Marshes:** These marshes are found along the edges of tidally influenced rivers, upstream of salt marshes and brackish tidal marshes. This natural community includes marshes with salinities ranging from less than 0.5 – 5 parts per thousand. Typical plant communities are dominated by a variety of emergent graminoids and forbs, such as giant cutgrass, sawgrass, southern wild-rice, giant cordgrass, pickerelweed, cattails, and green arrow-
arum.
- **Tidal Swamps:** These freshwater forested wetlands exist as narrow to wide bands along the floodplains of tidal rivers and creeks. The canopy is usually dominated by bald-cypress and water tupelo, but may also include sweet gum, swamp tupelo, green ash, swamp red maple, water oak, and swamp bay.

		Intertidal Beach	Maritime Dunes	Maritime Forests	Interdunal Wetlands	Salt & Brackish Marshes	Freshwater & Brackish Marches	Tidal Swamps
Trees								
<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red maple				x			x
<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>	Musclewood							x
<i>Carya glabra</i>	Pignut hickory			x				
<i>Fraxinus caroliniana</i>	Carolina ash							x
<i>Ilex cassine</i>	Dahoon							x
<i>Ilex opaca</i>	American holly			x				
<i>Ilex vomitoria</i>	Yaupon		x	x		x		
<i>Juniperus virginiana</i> var. <i>silicicola</i>	Southern red cedar		x	x		x		
<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	Sweetgum							x
<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	Southern magnolia			x				
<i>Nyssa aquatica</i>	Water tupelo						x	x
<i>Nyssa biflora</i>	Swamp tupelo				x			x
<i>Persea borbonia</i>	Red bay			x				
<i>Persea palustris</i>	Swamp bay				x			x
<i>Pinus elliotii</i>	Slash pine			x				
<i>Pinus palustris</i>	Longleaf pine			x				
<i>Pinus taeda</i>	Loblolly pine			x				
<i>Quercus geminata</i>	Sand live oak			x				
<i>Quercus hemisphaerica</i>	Sand laurel oak			x				
<i>Quercus nigra</i>	Water oak							x
<i>Quercus virginiana</i>	Live oak		x	x				
<i>Sabal palmetto</i>	Sabal palm			x	x	x		
<i>Salix caroliniana</i>	Carolina willow				x			
<i>Taxodium distichum</i>	Bald cypress						x	x
Shrubs								
<i>Alnus serrulata</i>	Tag alder							x
<i>Baccharis halimifolia</i>	Groundsel tree		x			x	x	
<i>Borrichia frutescens</i>	Seaside oxeye					x		

<i>Callicarpa americana</i>	American beautyberry			x				
<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	Buttonbush				x			x
<i>Cornus stricta</i>	Southern swamp dogwood							x
<i>Cyrilla racemiflora</i>	Ti-ti							x
<i>Decodon verticillatus</i>	Water-oleander				x			
<i>Eubotrys racemosa</i>	Coastal fetterbush							x
<i>Forestiera acuminata</i>	Swamp-privet							x
<i>Itea virginica</i>	Virginia-willow							x
<i>Iva frutescens</i>	Maritime marsh-elder					x	x	
<i>Iva imbricata</i>	Dune marsh-elder		x					
<i>Kosteletzkya virginica</i>	Southern seashore-mallow					x		
<i>Lyonia ferruginea</i>	Crookedwood, rusty lyonia			x				
<i>Morella cerifera</i>	Wax-myrtle		x	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Planera aquatica</i>	Water-elm							x
<i>Sabal minor</i>	Dwarf palmetto							x
<i>Serenoa repens</i>	Saw palmetto		x	x				
<i>Sideroxylon tenax</i>	Tough buckthorn		x					
<i>Vaccinium arboreum</i>	Sparkleberry			x				
<i>Vaccinium elliotii</i>	Mayberry			x				
<i>Viburnum nudum</i>	Southern wild raisin							x
<i>Viburnum obovatum</i>	Small-leaf viburnum							x
<i>Xanthoxylum clava-herculis</i>	Hercules'-club		x	x				
<i>Yucca aloifolia</i>	Spanish dagger		x					
Vines								
<i>Ampelopsis arboreum</i>	Peppervine		x	x				
<i>Clematis crispa</i>	Southern leatherflower							x
<i>Decumaria barbara</i>	Climbing hydrangea							x
<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolius</i>	Virginia creeper			x				
<i>Smilax auriculata</i>	Dune greenbrier		x					
<i>Vitis rotundifolia</i>	Muscadine			x				
Ferns								
<i>Asplenium platyneuron</i>	Ebony spleenwort			x				
<i>Azolla caroliniana</i>	Eastern mosquito fern				x			
<i>Onoclea sensibilis</i>	Sensitive fern							x
<i>Osmunda regalis</i>	Royal fern							x
<i>Osmundastrum cinnamomeum</i>	Cinnamon fern			x				x
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken fern			x				
<i>Woodwardia aerolata</i>	Netted chain fern							x
Herbaceous								

<i>Acorus calamus</i>	European calamus						X	
<i>Amaranthus cannabinus</i>	Salt-marsh water-hemp						X	
<i>Arisaema dracontium</i>	Green dragon							X
<i>Batis maritima</i>	Saltwort					X		
<i>Bidens laevis</i>	Showy bur-marigold						X	
<i>Brasenia schreberi</i>	Water-shield				X			
<i>Cakile harperi</i>	Southeastern sea rocket	X	X					
<i>Clitoria mariana</i>	Butterfly pea		X					
<i>Cnidioscolus stimulosus</i>	Tread-softly		X					
<i>Croton punctatus</i>	Silverleaf croton	X						
<i>Elephantopus nudatus</i>	Coastal Plain elephant's-foot			X				
<i>Euphorbia polygonifolia</i>	Northern seaside spurge		X					
<i>Heterotheca subaxillaris</i>	Camphorweed		X					
<i>Hibiscus moscheutos</i>	Eastern rose-mallow				X		X	
<i>Hydrocotyle bonariensis</i>	Dune water-pennywort	X	X					
<i>Impatiens capensis</i>	Orange jewelweed						X	
<i>Ipomoea imperati</i>	Beach morning-glory	X	X					
<i>Ipomoea pes-caprae</i>	Railroad vine	X	X					
<i>Iris virginica</i>	Southern blue flag						X	
<i>Justicia ovata</i> var. <i>ovata</i>	Coastal Plain water-willow							X
<i>Lemna</i> spp.	Duckweed				X			
<i>Limnobium spongia</i>	American frog's-bit				X			
<i>Lippia nodiflora</i>	Creeping frogfruit		X					
<i>Mitchella repens</i>	Partridge-berry			X				
<i>Nelumbo lutea</i>	American lotus-lily				X			
<i>Nuphar advena</i>	Broadleaf pondlily				X		X	
<i>Nymphaea odorata</i>	White waterlily				X			
<i>Nymphoides aquatica</i>	Big floating heart				X			
<i>Oenothera humifusa</i>	Seabeach evening-primrose		X					
<i>Opuntia pusilla</i>	Dune prickly-pear		X					
<i>Orontium aquaticum</i>	Golden club						X	
<i>Peltandra virginica</i>	Green arrow-arum				X		X	X
<i>Persicaria arifolia</i>	Halberd-leaf tearthumb						X	
<i>Persicaria punctata</i>	Dotted smartweed						X	
<i>Persicaria sagittata</i>	Arrowleaf tearthumb						X	
<i>Pityopsis graminifolia</i>	Silkgrass		X					
<i>Pontederia cordata</i>	Pickerelweed				X	X	X	
<i>Potamogeton</i> spp.	Pondweed				X			
<i>Sagittaria graminea</i>	Grassy arrowhead				X			

<i>Sagittaria lancifolia</i>	Bulltongue arrowhead							X	
<i>Sagittaria latifolia</i>	Broadleaf arrowhead				X				
<i>Salicornia bigelovii</i>	Dwarf saltwort						X		
<i>Salicornia virginica</i>	Virginia glasswort						X		
<i>Sarcocornia pacifica</i>	Pacific swampfire						X		
<i>Sesuvium maritimum</i>	Small sea-purslane	X							
<i>Sesuvium portulacastrum</i>	Large sea-purslane	X	X						
<i>Symphiotrichum subulatum</i>	Annual saltmarsh aster						X		
<i>Symphiotrichum tenuifolium</i>	Perennial saltmarsh aster						X		
<i>Typha angustifolia</i>	Narrowleaf cattail				X	X			
<i>Typha domingensis</i>	Southern cattail				X	X	X		
<i>Typha latifolia</i>	Common cattail				X			X	
<i>Utricularia</i> spp.	Bladderworts				X				
<i>Wolffia columbiana</i>	Watermeal				X				
Grasses									
<i>Chasmanthium sessiliflorum</i>	Longleaf spikegrass			X					
<i>Cladium jamaicense</i>	Sawgrass				X	X	X		
<i>Distichlis spicata</i>	Saltgrass						X		
<i>Leersia oryzoides</i>	Rice cutgrass							X	
<i>Muhlenbergia sericea</i>	Dune hairgrass		X						
<i>Panicum amarum</i>	Bitter seabeach grass	X	X						
<i>Paspalum vaginatum</i>	Sand knotgrass	X	X						
<i>Piptochaetium avenaceum</i>	Eastern needlegrass			X					
<i>Saccharum giganteum</i>	Sugarcane plumegrass							X	
<i>Spartina alternifolia</i>	Smooth cordgrass						X		
<i>Spartina bakeri</i>	Sand cordgrass				X	X			
<i>Spartina cynosuroides</i>	Giant cordgrass						X	X	
<i>Spartina patens</i>	Large saltmeadow cordgrass	X	X				X		
<i>Sporobolus virginicus</i>	Seashore dropseed	X	X						
<i>Zizania aquatica</i>	Southern wild-rice							X	
<i>Zizaniopsis mileacea</i>	Giant cutgrass							X	
Sedges									
<i>Bolboschoenus robustus</i>	Salt marsh bulrush						X		
<i>Eleocharis</i> spp.	Spikerushes							X	
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Common rush				X				
<i>Juncus roemerianus</i>	Black needlerush						X		
<i>Schoenoplectus americanus</i>	Threesquare						X	X	
<i>Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani</i>	Softstem bulrush						X	X	