

## Why conserve seagrass?



Seagrasses are economically and ecologically valuable to both humans and marine life. Seagrass is one of the most productive natural ecosystems in the world.

Seagrasses improve water quality by acting as nutrient sinks, buffering or filtering nutrient and chemical inputs to the marine environment. They also stabilise coastal sediments, helping to avert erosion.

Seagrasses provide food and shelter for many organisms (shrimps, crabs, worms, snails and small fish) and are a nursery ground for commercially important prawn and fish species. Larger fish and seabirds visit seagrass meadows to feed.

Endangered sea turtles and dugongs also graze on seagrass.

Seagrass meadows are fragile ecosystems. Human impacts such as excessive pollution from sewage discharge, oil spills, herbicides, coastal runoff, dredging, boat propellers and anchors/moorings can damage or destroy seagrasses.



## How you can help

In Queensland, all marine plants, including seagrass, are protected from unlawful damage. Incidental damage and limited collection of seagrass is allowed if only in accordance with the DPI&F self assessable code MPO5 (see website below).

Many efforts are underway to educate the public about the benefits of seagrass and how they can help to protect seagrass. There are many ways you can help: don't litter; be aware when applying fertilizers and pesticides, as excess amounts can wash down gutters and drains to the sea; when boating, slow down and avoid shallow areas; support marine conservation initiatives; learn about these special marine habitats and volunteer to monitor their health by joining Seagrass-Watch.

Seagrass-Watch is a global seagrass assessment and monitoring program. Seagrass-Watch monitoring efforts are vital to assist with tracking global patterns in seagrass health, and assess the human impacts which have the potential to destroy or degrade these coastal ecosystems and decrease their yield of natural resources. Responsive management based on adequate information will help to prevent any further significant areas and species being lost. To protect the valuable seagrass meadows along our coasts, everyone must work together.

For more information visit:  
[www.seagrasswatch.org](http://www.seagrasswatch.org)



## Seagrasses of Dunk Island



### *Cymodocea rotundata*

- flat, strap-like leaves 2-4mm wide
- rounded, smooth leaf tip
- smooth rhizome
- leaf scars form continuous ring around the stem
- found on shallow reef flats



### *Cymodocea serrulata*

- strap-like leaves, 5-9mm wide
- leaf tip serrated
- leaf sheath is broadly triangular
- leaf scars not continuous ring around the stem
- found on shallow subtidal reef flats



### *Halodule uninervis*

- trident leaf tip
- 1 central longitudinal vein
- rhizome usually pale with clean black leaf scars
- dugong & turtle preferred food



### *Halophila decipiens*

- Small oval leaf blade 1-2.5cm long
- 6-8 cross veins
- Leaf hairs on both sides
- Leaves usually longer than wider



### *Halophila ovalis*

- oval shaped leaves in pairs
- 8 or more cross veins
- smooth leaf surface
- preferred dugong food



### *Halophila spinulosa*

- fern like
- leaves arranged in opposite pairs
- erect shoot up to 15cm long
- found at subtidal depths (>3m)



### *Halophila triostata*

- Erect shoots 8-18cm long
- Leaves with 3 veins
- 2-3 leaves at each node
- Leaves "whorl" around stem
- Found at subtidal depths (>10m)



### *Syringodium isoetifolium*

- narrow, cylindrical spaghetti-like leaves
- leaves 7-30cm long, taper to a point
- 2-3 leaves arising at each shoot
- rhizomes thin



### *Thalassia hemprichii*

- broad ribbon like, curved leaves
- short black bars of tannin cells in leaf blade
- thick rhizome with scars between shoots
- common on reef flats



Text and design by L. McKenzie and R. Yoshida, seagrass watercolours by R. Berry.

Seagrass-Watch HQ  
Northern Fisheries Centre  
Po Box, 5396, Cairns QLD 4870  
AUSTRALIA  
Email: [hq@seagrasswatch.org](mailto:hq@seagrasswatch.org)  
Phone: +61 7 4057 3731  
[www.seagrasswatch.org](http://www.seagrasswatch.org)

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