

## MNSA Dichotomous Key of Plants in the Salt Marsh

A **dichotomous key** is a tool that helps us to identify items. Keys consist of a series of choices that lead us to the correct name of a given item. "Dichotomous" means "divided into two parts". Therefore, dichotomous keys always give two choices in each step.

1a	Floating/ Laying on a surface/ attached to an object	Go to 2
1b	Growing in ground	Go to 3
2a	Thin and translucent sheets	Sea Lettuce <i>Uva lactuca</i>
2b	With branches and air sacs	Rock Weed <i>Fucus vesiculosus</i>
3a	Grass-like	Go to 4
3b	Non-grass-like	Go to 7
4a	Grass is hollow	Go to 5
4b	Grass is not hollow	Go to 6
5a	Grass is stiff, rigid, and may have a feathery seedpod at top	Giant Reed <i>Phragmites australis</i>
5b	Grass is flimsy and salty to the touch	Salmarsh Cordgrass <i>Spartina alterniflora</i>
6a	Grass is thin and hair-like and may have a few long seedpods on opposite sides at the tip	Saltmeadow Cordgrass <i>Spartina patens</i>
6b	Grass has blades on opposite sides and may have a "wheat-like" seedpod	Spike Grass <i>Distichlis spicata</i>
7a	The plant has a woody stem	Go to 8
7b	The plant has a fleshy stem	Go to 11
8a	Plant has leaves	Go to 9
8b	Plant has tiny scales, narrow and triangular in form	Eastern Red-cedar <i>Juniperus virginiana</i>
9a	Leaves are roughly diamond shaped, thin, with teeth along the edge	Groundsel Bush <i>Baccharis halimifolia</i>
9b	Leaves are oval shaped	Go to 10
10a	With teeth along the edge	Marsh Elder <i>Iva frutescens</i>
10b	Without teeth along the edge	Northern Bayberry <i>Myrica pensylvanica</i>
11a	Plant has flat leaves	Go to 12
11b	Plant has thick, succulent leaves	Go to 15
12a	Leaves are arrow shaped	Common Orach <i>Atriplex patula</i>
12b	Leaves are oval shaped	Go to 13
13a	Stem has many thorns	Seaside rose <i>Rosa rugosa</i>
13b	Stem has no thorns	Go to 14
14a	Leaves grow along a tall stem	Seaside Goldenrod <i>Solidago sempervirens</i>
14b	Leaves grow out from the ground staying close to the ground	Sea Lavender <i>Limonium carolinianum</i>
15a	Leaves are without thorns or spines	Go to 16
15b	Leaves have thorns and spines	Prickly Pear Cactus <i>Opuntia humifusa</i>
16a	Leaves are worm-like with segments	Glasswort <i>Salicornia virginica</i>
16b	Leaves are whorled fleshy spikes	Sea-blite <i>Suaeda maritima</i>