

Desert Saltbush

Atriplex polycarpa (Torr.) S. Watson

plant symbol = ATPO

Contributed by:

Tucson Plant Materials Center

Tucson, Arizona



Alternate Names

Cattle Saltbush

Allscale

Cattle Spinach

Key Web Sites

www.plants.usda.gov

www.calflora.org

Extensive information about this species is linked to the Plants web site. To access this information, go to the Plants web site, select this plant, and utilize the links at the bottom of the Plants Profile for this species.

Uses

Desert saltbush is primarily an erosion control plant for use on mismanaged

rangelands and other critical areas such as abandoned cropland and road cuts. Desert

saltbush may also provide high value forage during the cool seasons of the year.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Weediness

Please consult with your local NRCS Field Office, Cooperative Extension Service office or state natural resource or agriculture department regarding its status and use. Weed information is also available from the PLANTS Web site.

Description

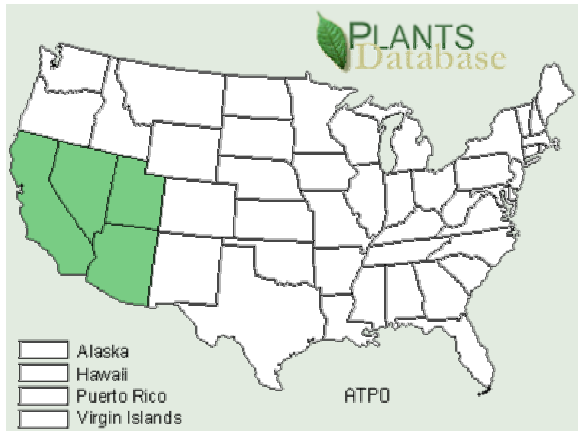
Desert saltbush (*Atriplex polycarpa*) is a perennial, upright shrub 3 to 4 feet tall. Branches are gray to yellowish-brown with bark that sheds in long strips. Male and female flowers are borne on separate plants. The male flowers occur in the leaf axils or on terminal spikes, while the female flowers occur along the numerous branches in scattered flower clusters. The flowers are tan to greenish and the mature seed is pale brown. Desert saltbush typically flowers from May to August, with fruit ripening from October to December and seed dispersing from November to May.

Adaptation

Desert saltbush may be found in the San Joaquin Valley, Mojave and Colorado Deserts in California, southern Nevada, southwestern Utah and Arizona, Baja California, and northwestern California. Desert saltbush is found on alkaline plains and occasionally rocky or gravelly slopes in

desert or grassland from 400 to 3,000 feet with only 3 to 10 inches of annual precipitation. It is not as widespread as fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), but more drought tolerant and less cold tolerant. Desert saltbush flourishes on soils unsuitable for most species, and is usually absent from less saline soils.

Known Distribution



Establishment

Seed may be drilled, broadcast, or hydroseeded into a firm soil at a depth of $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Heavier textured soils may require a more shallow planting depth. When seed is broadcast dragging or harrowing helps to obtain appropriate soil cover. Desert saltbush is usually planted as 5-10% of a seed mix.

Management

Desert saltbush establishes easily when adequate soil moisture is present. Young plants should be protected from livestock until they reach maturity. An appropriate management system would permit only limited use during the summer and fall months. The species has been virtually eradicated by overgrazing in much of its original range.

Pests and Potential Problems

Under natural conditions, no problems have been identified.

Environmental Concerns

Desert saltbush is a native shrub and may spread into adjoining areas via seed distribution. However, spread is not alarming even under optimal conditions.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Blythe Germplasm was released in 2001 as a selected class of certified seed (natural track) by the USDA-NRCS Tucson Plant Materials Center. It was evaluated for uniformity, seed production, vigor and cover. The accession was originally collected near Blythe, California.

Control

Please contact your local agricultural extension specialist or county weed specialist to learn what works best in your area and how to use it safely. Always read label and safety instructions for each control method. Trade names and control measures appear in this document only to provide specific information. USDA, NRCS does not guarantee or warranty the products and control methods named and other products may be equally effective.

Prepared By:

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SEPT2003 ERG

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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