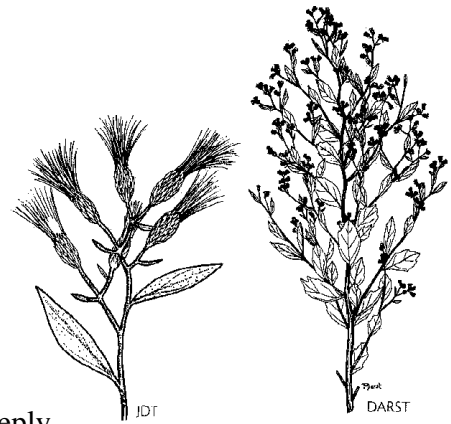


Saltbush

Saltbush, *Baccharis halimifolia*, is a woody shrub or small tree in the *Asteraceae* family. Other common names are groundsel tree, silverling, and sea myrtle. *Baccharis halimifolia* is found growing along the edges of salt and freshwater marshes, sloughs, old fields, and disturbed sites, both wet and dry. It can reach a height of ten feet with a spread of ten feet wide. It can be trained to a single trunk, however it is usually multi-trunked. Saltbush is found growing throughout Florida and along the coast to Texas and Massachusetts.



The leaves are evergreen, alternate, and spatulate. The margins are deeply toothed or notched and up to 3 inches in length. The color is light green to silvery green.

The flowers are small, white or greenish and in compound heads. The male and female flowers are on separate plants (dioecious). White hair like bristles extend beyond the leafy bracts of the female flowers giving the plant a cottony, or silvery appearance. The bristles also help in dispersing the tiny seeds. The flowers appear in the fall at a time when few other plants flower. The similar *Baccharis glomerulifolia* can be distinguished by having flower heads that tend to be short stalked or sessile and appear clustered around the leaf axil. Both species are found in the same habitat.

Saltbush is a useful shrub for reclaiming moist or wet sites. It is an excellent addition along retention areas and drainage ponds, and it is also a nice addition to any landscape because it flowers when few other plants are flowering.

The leaves and flowers of this plant contain a cardioactive glycoside that is toxic to cattle, sheep and horses. The evergreen appearance is attractive to these animals when other forage is not available.

Bees and small butterflies use the nectar from the flowers of saltbush.

by Sharon LaPlante

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