Halophila hawaiiana

Doty and Stone 1966

Halophila hawaiiana, our native seagrass, is a somewhat rare flowering plant in sandy reef regions or bays on Hawaiian coasts.

Division	Anthophyta
Class	Alismatidae
Order	Hydrocharitales
Family	Hydrocharitaceae
Genus	*Halophila*

Identifying Features

DESCRIPTION

Pairs of leaves on petioles along a rhizome rooted in sand. Leaves are from 1.8 - 5 mm wide, obovate to spatulate. Male and female flowers are produced infrequently on separate plants. Branching leads to intertwined plants in a meadow or runners colonizing new substrate.

COLOR

Bright green.

Habitat

Forms patches or meadows in sand with only the leaves visible, often covered by epiphytes. Found subtidally at 0.5 - 4 m in sandy areas surrounding reefs, in bays or fishponds.

Structural

Leaves are crisp, remaining erect out of water; midrib and margin thickened. Leaf surface smooth, shiny, margin without spines or serrations.

Distribution

HAWAI'I

O'ahu, Maui, Moloka'i, Kau'i, Midway.

WORLDWIDE

MECHANISM OF INTRODUCTION

Endemic to Hawai'i.

Ecology/Impact

Halophila hawaiiana is a relatively rare subtidal seagrass, a flowering plant with roots that hold sediments. Like other seagrasses, *Halophila* meadows support a rich community of associated organisms in sediments and on the leaf blades, providing food and shelter for more mobile organisms such as fish and crustaceans. *Halophila hawaiiana* is part of the Hawaiian green turtle's diet.

References

Phillips, R.C. and E.G. Menez. Seagrasses. 1988. Smithsonian Contributions to the Marine Sciences 34. 89 pp.

Russell, D. J. and G. H. Balazs, 2000. Identification manual for dietary vegetation of the Hawaiian green turtle , *Chelonia mydas*. NOAA TM-NMFS-SWFSC-294. 49 pp.

WEB LINK

Seagrass Page. http://www.botany.hawaii.edu/seagrass/