



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered Species
Program**

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Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

**Seabeach Amaranth
Amaranthus pumilus
Raf.**

State Status: **None**
Federal Status: **Threatened**

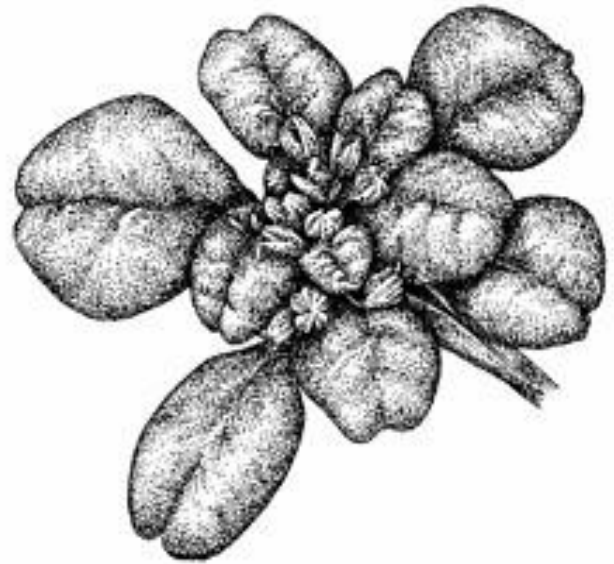
DESCRIPTION: Seabeach Amaranth is an annual plant that once grew along coastal beaches from Massachusetts to South Carolina. This species begins from seed every year and forms a tiny reddish sprig initially, which in early July begins to branch and form a clump that hugs the sand and can get to up to a meter (3.3 feet) in diameter but typically will only grow to 20 to 40 cm (8 to 16 inches) high. It has dark green fleshy leaves that are somewhat wrinkled in appearance and quite small, 1-2 cm long (less than an inch). The leaves may appear a bit like a miniature spinach, which is in the same family. The stems are reddish. The flowers of the plant are extremely small. The plant is monoecious, meaning that the female and male flowers occur on the same plant but are in separate flowers.

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION: Within the proper beach habitat, Seabeach Amaranth does not look like any other species of plant and is very unlikely to be confused with another species.

HABITAT: Seabeach Amaranth grows in the narrow band of sand just beyond the high tide line and up to the foredune. It is adapted to low competition and shifting sands.

POPULATION STATUS IN MASSACHUSETTS: Seabeach Amaranth has been found in historically in only two locations in the Commonwealth, on Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. It is listed as endangered in Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey and Maryland, and threatened in North Carolina. Because large storm events sometimes cause new populations of this plant to appear, it should be searched for.

RANGE: Seabeach Amaranth was found historically on coastal beaches from Massachusetts to South Carolina.



*Illustration by Elizabeth Farnsworth,
New England Wild Flower Society.*

THREATS: Although this species tolerates considerable natural disturbance with sea spray and shifting and blowing sands, it does not tolerate human disturbance well at all. This includes trampling, beach grooming, and the common practice of driving vehicles and ATVs on the beaches. The other major threat is from development, beach fortification, seawalls, and revetment projects that eliminate the ability of the sands to shift and blow and, in some cases, eliminate other sediment sources that replenish and build up beaches.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS: Management recommendations for Seabeach Amaranth include further survey work to document the presence and distribution of this species, and to continue management protection of beaches that are untrammeled

A Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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by vehicles and ATVs. Human traffic of all kinds (including foot traffic) should be prohibited for any new locations of Seabeach Amaranth through the use of tape or string fencing and signage similar to that used to protect piping plover nest areas.

Surprisingly, there has been a case in New Jersey where the plant has appeared on newly, artificially replenished beaches, so this human disturbance does not necessarily have to be avoided. However a thorough two-year search effort should be conducted in the area before a beach is altered. The best time to search for Seabeach Amaranth is mid-August through October and even until mid-November. Vegetative plants can be sought as early as July.

Prepared by R.W. Wernerehl, 2015

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