

RED SEAWEED

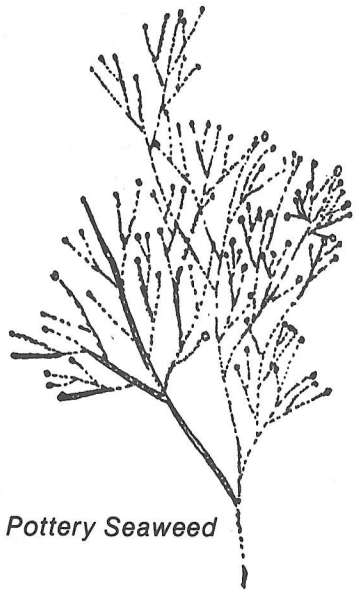
Phylum: Rhodophyta

This group of seaweed ranges in color from pink to rosy red to reddish-purple, but some members may be blackish, brown, or tinged with yellow or green. The red color is due to the presence of water soluble pigments which mask the green chlorophyll. These pigments are affected by light intensity—the stronger the light, the lighter the color of the plant. Specimens found drifting may be reddish-green in color, depending on how long the plant has been adrift.

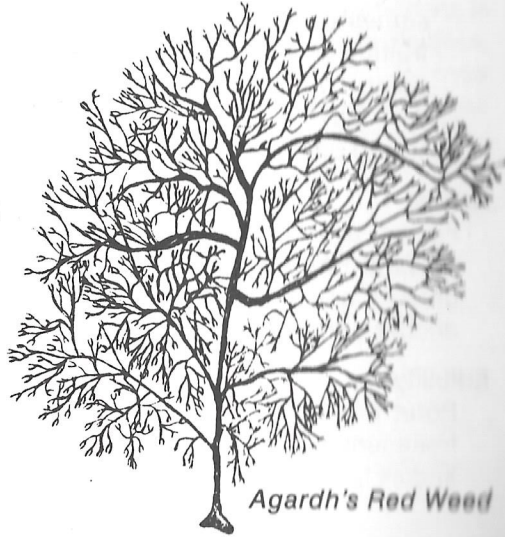
Almost all the red seaweeds are marine species with thalli ranging in size from microscopic to macroscopic. The plant body is filamentous and can form massive thin sheets, or it can be coarse, cylindrical, or rope-like.

This group grows in all latitudes, but prefers temperate and tropical waters. It is the most common species in lower intertidal zones.

Red seaweeds are an important part of the food chain in salt water environments. The agar and carrageenin extracted from them are used as media for bacteria cultures. They are used in foods, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and industrial liquids as a suspending agent, and carrageenin can control crystal growth in frozen confections. A number of red algae can be consumed raw, used in soups and sauces, or eaten as a vegetable. They can also be mounted and used decoratively.



Pottery Seaweed



Agardh's Red Weed

Pottery Seaweed (Banded Weeds)

Family: Ceramiaceae
Ceramium rubrum

Description

Size: 1/16" thick; few inches long up to 1 foot.

Characteristics: Bushy, firm to coarse, with segmented, branching thallus; the branches appear banded, the branch tips are pincer-like; each apex has tiny, forked divisions that curve inward and look like a grasping appendage (you sometimes need a hand lens to see this detail); attaches to a holdfast by its disc-like base.

Color: Red to brown or green.

Habitat

Found in lower intertidal to subtidal zones in shallow water; found free-floating or as part of a tangled colony attached to many substrates.

Edibility

Poor; a likely food for small fish and invertebrates.

Agardh's Red Weed

Family: Solieriaceae
Agardhiella tenera

Description

Size: 12" or more in length.

Characteristics: Bushy, shallow-water alga; grows from a disc-shaped holdfast; the main axis branches irregularly into many round branches; thallus is cylindrical and fleshy; hefty and top-heavy when removed from the water.

Color: Deep red, tinged with yellowish-green.

Habitat

Found in quiet waters below the tide level; dense colonies may completely cover rocks and shell beds in quiet bays and inlets; a haven for small fish and invertebrates.

Edibility

Poor

FLOWERING PLANTS

Phylum: Spermatophyta

These flowering plants, unlike algae, have complex internal tissues which conduct fluids. They have well-defined stems, leaves, and roots. Flowering plants reproduce by the formation of seeds, making them easy to distinguish from algae.

EELGRASS (Barnacle Grass, Grass Wrack)

Family: Zosteraceae

Zostera marina

Description

Size: 1/4" thick; up to 3' long; seeds are less than 1/8" long.

Characteristics: An important component of Marine flora; grows from a knobby rhizome (runner) that attaches to mud or sand; three (sometimes five) veins run the length of the blade; produces small flowers that blossom in late spring or early summer; small, ribbed, oval seeds. Has been stricken by "Wasting Disease," a blight whose cause is a mystery. During the 1930's nearly all Atlantic Coast eelgrass was wiped out and some areas have still not recovered. This blight also affected the number of bay scallops normally found in these weed beds.

Color: Living specimens are green; black when dead; bleach white when washed up on the beach.

Habitat

Grows in clumps over shallow-bottomed bays; stabilizes shifting sediments and aids in development of coastal marsh lands; provides shelter and support for small marine animals (invertebrates and algae grow on the grass, other organisms burrow around the roots, sticklebacks and other small fish hide in the floating leaves).

Edibility

Poor; the principal winter food source for brant (small wild geese), and various species of duck; early settlers used the dried grass for mattress and upholstery stuffing.

Eelgrass

