

Grasses of Montserrat

An introduction to common and useful species

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Sour Grass
Digitaria insularis

Native. Grows 1-2m, with coarser leaves and a sour scent. Grows in old pastures and disturbed areas. Deep, fibrous roots that make it difficult to remove once established.



Crab Grass
Digitaria ciliaris

Introduced. A spreading grass with hairy stems with leaves 4-15 cm long. Grows quickly in disturbed soils. Widespread. Often considered a weed but useful for covering bare ground.



Carpet Grass
Axonopus compressus

Native. Broad, flat leaves 3-15 cm long. Low-growing, mat-forming grass. Common on lawns and roadsides. Prefers moist areas. Good ground cover.



Lovegrass
Eragrostis ciliaris

Introduced. Small tufted grass 15-60cm tall, Often growing between rocks and gravel. Tiny seeds are eaten by birds. Erosion control.



Purpletop Grass
Chloris barbata

Introduced. A tufted grass with purple-tinted seed heads. Flat, narrow, leaves 5-20 cm long. Often found in dry open spaces. Helps prevent erosion.

Lemon Grass or Fever Grass
Cymbopogon citratus

Introduced. A tall plant; grows in dense clumps up to 1.5m; lemon fragrance. Common in backyard gardens and wild patches. Fragrant grass used in tea and cooking, known for medicinal properties and an insect-repellent.



Bamboo Grass
Lasiacis divaricata

Native. A climbing or scrambling grass with bamboo-like hollow stems. In forests or shady areas. Provides shelter for wildlife.

Dutch Grass or Crowfootgrass
Eleusine indica

Introduced. A hardy grass recognized by its "crow's foot" seed head with 2 to 10 finger-like spikes. Can grow 30-90cm. Roadsides and walkways. Helps bind loose soil.



Guinea Grass
Megathyrsus maximus

Introduced. Tall, up to 2-3m, robust grass. Grows in open sunny spaces. Fodder for livestock but can spread aggressively and out-compete other species.



Jungle Rice or Little Barnyard Grass
Echinochloa colona

Introduced. Short-lived, fast-growing grass from 30-100cm tall. Often in wet or muddy places. Can be used in cooking.



Sugar Cane
Saccharum officinarum

Introduced. A thick-stemmed grass growing up to 6m. Easily recognised by jointed stalks and feathery flowers. Widespread. Cultivated for sugar and rum. Historically important in agricultural economy.

Grasses are everywhere around us – from forest edges to back yard gardens, pastures and roadsides. Yet they're often overlooked. On Montserrat they play an important role in shaping the landscape and supporting local wildlife.

In 2022, a project funded by several UK Research Institutes aimed to capture traditional knowledge of plants on Montserrat. Training in oral histories as well as equipment enabled information to be captured and stored in a National Archive.

Using this knowledge two versions of a booklet have been published the first with artwork by Lizzie Harper and with images taken at the Montserrat National Trust's Botanic Gardens.

iNaturalist has enabled citizen scientists to capture data on island to help understand more about the islands grasses and plants in general. This has been very popular- see the QR code at the bottom.

More information

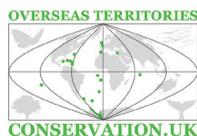
See: www.montserratnationaltrust.ms

<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/key-projects/biodiversity-and-wellbeing-toolkit>

Gallery of iNat:
Linking science, traditional knowledge

and art to foster local appreciation and connection to nature

This poster is based on a leaflet created as part of the *Biodiversity and Well-being toolkit* (DPLUS192). With thanks to local experts and community knowledge. Colour illustrations © Lizzie Harper. Design and layout by the Field Studies Council. For educational use only. Species ID may vary slightly by location.



UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology



Gallery of iNat

