

AMMOPHILA BREVILIGULATA Fern.  
American Beach Grass

FAMILY: Gramineae (Poaceae)

HABIT: Herbaceous, extensively rhizomatous perennial, 5-10 dm.; flowering July-September.

SIMILAR SPECIES: This species is very similar to the taller European beach grass, *Ammophila arenaria*, which has been planted occasionally in Ohio. There is no other native grass along the Lake Erie beaches that could be confused with *A. breviligulata*.

TOTAL RANGE: Along the Atlantic coast from Nfld. to NC, and disjunct along the beaches of the Great Lakes.

STATE RANGE: There are post-1980 records from 4 counties bordering Lake Erie: Ashtabula, Lake, Cuyahoga, and Erie. There are pre-1980 records from Ottawa and Lucas counties.

HABITAT: Dunes and sand along the beaches of Lake Erie.

HAZARDS: Chiefly mechanical. The raising of the water levels reduces its habitat. The use of off-road vehicles along the sand dunes rips out the rhizomes and makes re-establishment more difficult.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Very good. It rapidly spreads by long rhizomes that at times can grow eight feet a year. Laing (1958) discusses the problems of re-establishment and maintenance of this species.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Mature flowering material is needed for identification.

COMMENTS: This plant has an excellent chance of survival due to its efficient rhizome production. It is economically useful as a sand binder to minimize erosion. The recent planting of the European *Ammophila arenaria* in Ashtabula County poses two threats to the Ohio populations of *A. breviligulata*. The European species may be aggressive enough to supplant the American grass in suitable habitats along the lake. The genetic purity of *A. breviligulata* might also be diluted through hybridization. Ohio material should be used to stabilize dunes along the Lake Erie shoreline.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

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