

# OLD MAN SALTBU**S**H

*Atriplex nummularia*

S4  
SHRUB



# OLD MAN SALTBUSSH

*Atriplex nummularia*

Sustainable  
Grazing on  
Saline Land



SALTdeck Series

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S4

**Alternative names:** Cabbage Saltbush, Giant Saltbush. **Family:** Chenopodiaceae.

**Description:** Three subspecies are recognized (2 in Victoria and 1 in WA) but these are not always easy to identify. Erect perennial shrub to 2 m tall and 1.5 m wide. Male and female flowers in terminal clusters, mostly on separate plants (dioecious) (see photo). Leaves irregularly shaped to 4 cm across. Fruits fan-shaped to roughly round, to 6 mm wide.

**Key features:** Tall upright habit. Leaf surfaces uniformly grey-green.

**Value:** Grows in agricultural and rangeland areas with annual rainfall 175–500 mm. Palatability to livestock can be variable. Main disadvantage as a fodder plant is poor ability to produce volunteer seedlings. Hard annual grazing maintains biomass within reach of sheep. Deeper rooted than many other saltbushes and drought resistant. Once established, extremely tolerant of heavy annual grazing for short periods. Low to moderate energy value and good crude protein. Leaves contain up to 28% salt so supplements (grain, pasture or hay) and good quality drinking water are essential. Very high in vitamin E.

**Salinity and waterlogging tolerance:** Moderate salinity tolerance and high drought tolerance. Waterlogging especially in summer may cause leaf chlorosis and can kill this plant.

**Notes:** Native of central and southern Australia. Readily propagated from seeds and cuttings. It has disappeared from many areas where it was common due to cultivation and overgrazing.

**References:** *Saltland Pastures in Australia*, Barrett-Lennard, 2003. *Plants of Western NSW*, Cunningham et al., 1981. *Flora of Victoria*, Walsh & Entwisle (eds), 1994. *Variation between two saltbush species in plant composition & subsequent selection by sheep*, Norman et al., 2004. *Australian Journal of Agric. Research*, 55, 999–1007. *Plasma & tissue a-tocopherol concentrations & meat colour in sheep grazing saltbush*. Pearce et al., 2004. *Australian J. of Agric. Research* 56, 663–672.

