Star and Paddle Grass

The majority of seagrass you will see in Sarasota will be Manatee, Turtle and Shoal. However there are two other seagrasses that you may see Star Grass (*Halophila engelmannii*) and Paddle Grass *(Halophila decipiens)*. Very little is know about the genus *Halophila* and they only make up a small percent of our overall seagrass coverage in Sarasota.

When identifying Star and Paddle grasses, please keep in mind that there are several attached algae species that they could be mistaken for. Therefore, if you believe you have stumbled across a bed of star or paddle grass and wish to I.D. it we request that you do the following:

Fill out you filed sheet for that station completely and in the comments section make a note that you saw either star or paddle grass.
Take a picture for identification purposes and submit it to us with your field book or by email. Please be sure to include with your picture the station number so that we can accurately match up each picture. Make sure that the photo includes the intact plant and root system. If you need to take the plant home in order to take the picture, be sure to keep it cool by placing it in a cooler or a lunch box.
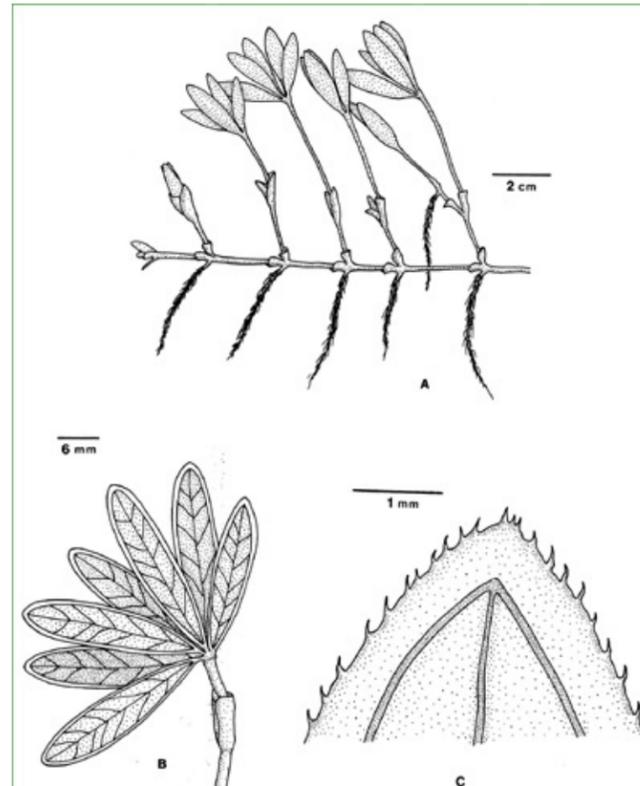
Star Grass
Halophila engelmannii

Star grass has a whorl of 5-7 leaves and it grows in depths up to 295 feet (90 m).
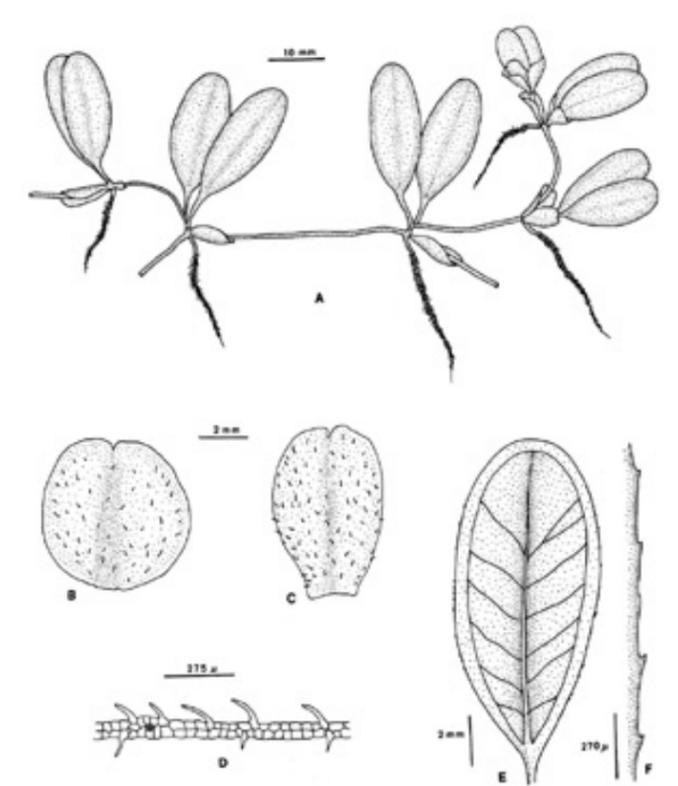
Paddle Grass
Halophila decipiens

Paddle grass is the only annual seagrass species, coming back from seeds every spring. Leaf blades are 1– 2. 5 cm long and 3– 6 mm wide and it can be found in very deep water with low light levels. It grows in water 30-100 ft (10– 30 m) deep but has been found up to 280 ft (85 m) deep.

Photo credit: Jon Perry-Sarasota County
Star Grass

http://research.myfwc.com/gallery/image_details.asp?id=7084
Star Grass

Halophila johnsonii. Photo courtesy of NOAA's Center for Coastal Fisheries and Habitat Research.
http://benthic.mlml.calstate.edu/hammerstrom/index.htm
Paddle Grass

http://research.myfwc.com/gallery/image_details.asp?id=7136
Paddle Grass