



**Title:** “Glasswort”

**Description:** Glasswort, *Sarcocornia quinqueflora*

**Photographer:** Henrik Moller

**Where, when:** Hakauppu Estuary, Tūmai, June 2021

**Sustainability?** Saltmarsh in southern New Zealand is often dominated by glasswort (*Sarcocornia quinqueflora*). Its strange name is derived from it being used to make soap and glass i.e. people would burn glasswort to collect the ashes which contained high levels of soda, an important ingredient of soap and glass.

Glasswort is edible. It is recommended to eat the fresh, young, upper parts of the glasswort stems raw, as they are tender and more flavourful. People eat glasswort on its own, like in a salad, or mixed with other salad ingredients, as a garnish with seafood, pickled, or add it to soups or stews for extra flavour. There is a growing interest in harvesting native species for food as part of a culture of eating local which will hopefully be harnessed to spur planting and harvesting for sustainability.

Estuaries, swamps and shrub habitats are generally not appreciated by New Zealanders as much as the iconic habitats like forests, alpine grasslands, lakes & rivers and the seashore. This probably reflects a reluctance to go into such habitats and experience their sounds, smell, plants and animals. However, these habitats provide crucial “ecosystem services” and are needed in a fully functioning ecological landscape *ki uta, ki tai* (From the mountains to the sea”). Saltmarsh provides important habitat for fish, birds and native New Zealand moths, and a filtration zone between land and estuary waters. Many estuaries and saltmarshes have been disrupted by development and urbanisation.

One way to raise the profile of these under-appreciated habitats is to feature a “Flagship species” – one that enchants people and requires the protection of the whole habitat for survival. For example, fernbirds are often chosen as flagships for swampy marsh areas.

Glasswort, is my pick for a flagship species to build appreciation for these important but neglected southern saltmarsh habitats. The glasswort’s numb 30-50 mm long fingers look gorgeous when frosted or encrusted with salt, and when they glow red and orange in the morning light as in this photograph.

**Photo notes:** This image is a crop from a panorama made by stitching six focus stacks (each with up to 40 images), using a 60mm macro lens, aperture of f/7.1, and exposure of 1/16s.

I took this photograph by inverting my tripod so the camera's viewfinder was just touching the water surface. I had plastered the flash connection with insulation tape to keep it dry, but it was still somewhat nerve wracking.

**Digital specs:** 5,393 x 3,016 pixels (16 MP).

**Key words:** Glasswort, *Sarcocornea*, saltmarsh, filtration, edible plants, flagship species, Henrik Moller, Aotearoa, New Zealand, Sustainability.

**Price:** \$150 (incl. GST) for use of the digital image.

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**Donation:** The price includes a \$100 donation to a sustainability organisation or project of your choice, or otherwise for the *East Otago Catchment Group* <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1547310312019600>.

We recommend that the donation goes to *East Otago Catchment Group* because they work in a community-led, collaborative bottom-up way to improve land and water care. Catchment groups draw town and country people together and find practical solutions based on local knowledge and energy.

**Image Ref:** HM#045 (Please refer to this reference in orders and correspondence)

**Henrik Moller**  
4 December 2021