

Seaweeds of Maine

Maine is home to some of the world's most beautiful and versatile seaweeds. Seaweeds are multicellular algae, also called macroalgae, which live in the marine environment and derive energy from the sun through photosynthesis.

Across the Maine coast, there are about 200 species of seaweed. These seaweeds play a critical role in our coastal ecosystems by providing habitat, utilizing organic nutrients, and generating oxygen. In addition to supporting ocean health, seaweeds are a valuable marine resource used in food, extracts, cosmetics, organic fertilizers, art, textiles, health products, and more. Maine is a leader in U.S. seaweed production, with an established wild harvest fishery and an emerging seaweed farming industry.

Species sizes depicted here are not proportional to one another. Refer to text below for actual measurements.

1. Sugar kelp (*Saccharina latissima*) Length: 5–16 feet **2. Bladderwrack** (*Fucus vesiculosus*) Length: 8–35 inches **3. Winged Kelp** (*Alaria esculenta*) Length: 6–12 feet **4. Horsetail kelp** (*Laminaria digitata*) Length: 1–5 feet **5. Irish moss** (*Chondrus crispus*) Length: 2–6 inches **6. Gracilaria** (*Gracilaria tikvahiae*) Length: 5–15 inches **7. Sea lettuce** (*Ulva lactuca*) Length: 6–18 inches **8. Skinny kelp** (*Saccharina angustissima*) Length: 14 feet and longer **9. Dulse** (*Palmaria palmata*) Length: 6–10 inches **10. Purple Laver** (*Porphyra* spp.) Size: round and hand-sized, up to 7 inches across **11. Northern pink laver** (*Wildemanian amplissima*) Length: 1–5 feet **12. Rockweed** (*Ascophyllum nodosum*) Length: 3–8 feet or longer

Seaweeds are classified into three categories based on pigments—**reds**, **browns**, and **greens**—and the different species belonging to each group have their own unique attributes and habitats. **Red** seaweeds are complex and form the largest group of seaweeds worldwide. **Brown** seaweeds are well known for large, canopy-forming species, like the kelps. **Green** seaweeds live in a wide range of habitats, including fresh water.

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