

SEA BINDWEED *Calystegia soldanella*

Bindweeds are the bane of every gardener but this is a well-behaved species, confining itself to the seaside. Many Norfolk populations seem rather reluctant to produce flowers.

IDENTIFICATION The flowers are typical of a bindweed in shape and are pink with 5 white stripes and a yellowish centre. They are similar to those of Field Bindweed *Convolvulus arvensis*, which is locally abundant near the coast, but the leaves of Sea Bindweed are kidney-shaped and distinctly fleshy and the base of the flower (the calyx) is enclosed by pouch-like bracteoles. **HABITAT** The strandline on sandy and shingle beaches, also dunes, both on bare ground and amongst a grassy sward. **DISTRIBUTION** Widespread in Norfolk, although absent from the Wash coast south of Snettisham and largely absent between Salthouse and Happisburgh. Occurs north to the Hebrides and SE Scotland.



Key features

- Stems prostrate, growing up to 1 m long
- Flowers 30-55 mm across

Key facts

- Perennial
- Pollinated by bumblebees or self-pollinated
- Flowers Jun-Aug

Field Bindweed (right) does not have fleshy, kidney-shaped leaves and the base of the flower is not enclosed by pouch-like bracteoles.



VIPER'S-BUGLOSS *Echium vulgare*

Forming sheets of brightest blue when en masse, its Norfolk stronghold is in Breckland but Viper's-bugloss is also locally conspicuous on the coast. The strange name reflects its rough, bristly feel ('bugloss' derives from the Greek for ox-tongued) and the supposed resemblance of various parts of the plant to a snake; indeed, the fruits, said to resemble an Adder's head, were used as a cure for snake bite (note, however, that the plant is actually poisonous).

IDENTIFICATION The whole plant is rather roughly hairy or bristly – the stem is dotted with red-based bristles. The erect, statuesque form, up to 1 m tall, clusters of purplish-pink buds and the bright blue, trumpet-shaped flowers, 10-19 mm long, with projecting purplish stamens, are a distinctive combination. Biennial, flowering Jun-Sep. **HABITAT** Open grassland and bare, disturbed ground on dry, often sandy soils, including clifftop grassland, dunes and shingle beaches. **DISTRIBUTION** Widespread in Britain north to S Scotland, but in Ireland largely confined to the E coast.



HOUND'S-TONGUE

Cynoglossum officinale

The strap-shaped, greyish leaves reminded herbalists of a dog's tongue, hence the name, and hence also its past use as a treatment for dig bites! **IDENTIFICATION** Greyish-green and softly downy to the touch, the plant is said to smell of roasted peanuts. Grows to 30-60 cm, with drooping, rich maroon-red flowers. A biennial, it blooms May-Jun, less often to Aug. **HABITAT** Disturbed ground on light, sandy soils and shingle; unpalatable to grazing animals and often stands proud on short, Rabbit-cropped turf. **DISTRIBUTION** In Norfolk common only in Breckland, on the Wash coast and the N coast east to Blakeney Point. Found north to S Scotland but commonest in SE England.