

Echium vulgare

COMMON NAME

viper's bugloss

FAMILY

Boraginaceae

AUTHORITY

Echium vulgare L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

ECHVUL

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

HABITAT

Terrestrial. Short tussock grassland, herbfield, bare land, riverbeds, usually in dry, low fertility inland areas.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Densely bristly annual or biennial herb to 50-90 cm high. Deep taproot. Stems stiff, erect, covered in reddish bristly hairs, with many short branches. Basal rosette leaves to 15 x 5 cm, narrow, stiffly bristly, harsh to touch. Stem leaves much smaller, alternate, also rough. Flowers funnel-shaped, 5-petaled, 12-18 mm long, pink in bud, becoming vivid blue (rarely remaining pink or white), 4 long stamens protruding and 1 smaller inside flower; in tapering spike-like heads, Nov-Jan. Seeds 4-angled, egg-shaped, 2 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

E. plantagineum Pattersons curse is less common (warmer areas only), has flowers 2-3 cm long, purplish-blue, with 2 protruding stamens, leaves less harsh. *Borago officinalis* borage occ escapes from cultivation, has star-like flowers 20-25 mm diam, in drooping clusters with cone of dark purple stamens; leaves with wavy margins, basal leaves up to 30 x 20 cm.

FLOWERING

November, December, January

FLOWER COLOURS

Blue, Red/Pink

LIFE CYCLE

Annual or Biennial. Produces many, long-lived seeds that are dispersed by wind, water, river gravel.

YEAR NATURALISED

1870

ORIGIN

Eurasia

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental



Viper's bugloss. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



Otakaha Stream, Palliser Bay. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 15/03/2008, Licence: CC BY.

TOLERANCES

Tolerates dry, wind, physical damage and poor soils.

ETYMOLOGY

echium: Possibly named the Greek echis 'viper', named for the seeds' resemblance to a vipers' head. The plant was believed by the 1st century physician Dioscorides to be a remedy for a viper's bite.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/echium-vulgare/>