

Coastal Flowers at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

There are 517 flowering plants recorded on the reserve. On the short circular walk around the southern part of the reserve you will see many of the **44** flowers in this leaflet. The flowering period is indicated by **F**. Plants that are considered Nationally scarce or rarer are marked *****.

Shingle Ridges



***Sea kale** has large cabbage like leaves. 10mm flowers with four petals (crucifer = cross) growing in masses, and they smell of honey. **F** May-Jun. Tough round seeds develop on the drying branches.



Yellow horned-poppy has four petalled 60mm flowers growing from a grey green rosette. **F** May-Oct. Seedpod to 350mm.



Sea campion has tubular 15mm flowers that are very low growing from mats of short thin leaves. **F** May-Sep.



***Sea pea** has sweet pea like flowers, but very low growing, with seeds in pea pods 50mm long. Leaves and seeds often attacked by the pea weevil. **F** May-Aug.



Herb Robert has 10mm flowers with 5 petals that develop into long pointed seedpods typical of the Geranium family. This is a seaside sub-species. **F** May-Jun.



Woody nightshade or bittersweet has yellow and purple flowers typical of the tomato family which turn into 6mm bright red fruits. This is a seaside sub-species of the woodland plant. **F** May-Aug.



***Babbington's orache** grows on shingle between the winter strandlines. It produces masses of black seeds because of its precarious location. **F** Jul-Sep.



Ivy-leaved toadflax very low growing with flowers only 7mm. Introduced and seen in towns on old walls. **F** May-Sep.



Curled dock grows to 50cm with masses of tiny red/brown flowers. The edge of the leaf is wavy. This is the seaside sub-species. **F** Jun-Oct.



Sticky groundsel up to 20cm with grey green leaves that are hairy and sticky. A 10mm flower turns into a tiny dandelion clock. **F** Jul-Sep.

Sandy Shingle



Viper's bugloss has 60cm tall purple/blue spikes on stems with glassy spines. Each flower has a tiny forked tongue. **F** Jun-Oct.



Twiggy mullein has up to 150cm tall stems with many 35mm flowers but shiny dark green leaves. **F** Jun-Oct.



Great mullein has up to 150cm tall stems with many 25mm flowers but densely hairy pale green leaves. **F** Jun-Aug.



Teasel has up to 150cm tall spiky stems with a flower head that has many tiny purple flowers emerging from the familiar spiky hard case. **F** Jul-Aug.



Wild carrot is up to 50cm tall with large flat flower heads with long bracts below. Often a darker flower at the centre of the disc. Also in grassland. **F** Jun-Aug.



Wild parsnip is up to 100cm tall with large flat yellow flower heads. Also seen in grassland. **F** Jul-Aug.

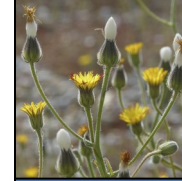
Beware of the irritating sap.



Red valerian is a garden escape that was dominating much of the shingle, so it is controlled here. Up to 50cm tall, usually with pink flowers. **F** May-Sep.



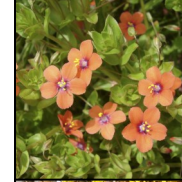
***Least lettuce** is up to 50cm tall but usually less than 20cm, flowers just 6mm and only open in morning! Leaves have a whitish midrib. Only known from 2 sites in Britain. **F** Jul-Sep.



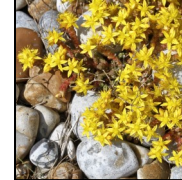
***Stinking hawkbeard** looks much like a dandelion, but leaves smell of cyanide! Became extinct in Britain and introduced here in 1999. Seedheads are white. Only grows within rabbit fenced areas. **F** Jul-Sep.



***Red hempnettle** grows to 20cm and has 9mm flowers. It is home to a very rare black flea beetle. **F** Jul-Sep.



Scarlet pimpernel low growing with flowers 6mm. Also known as poor man's weather glass, from its habit of closing its flowers in dull weather. **F** Jun-Sep.



Biting stonecrop or wall pepper is so named because of its peppery taste. It has succulent leaves that are often reddish. Flowers 12mm. **F** Jun-Jul.



Danish scurvygrass is very low growing with dark green spade shaped leaves. Flowers with 4 petals have a mauve tinge. **F** Jan-Jun.

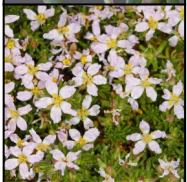
Saltmarsh



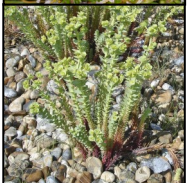
Glassworts. 5 similar species here, the most common grows to 20cm and is edible (marsh samphire). Flowers white, less than 1mm. Turns red, then purple in autumn. **F** Aug-Sep.



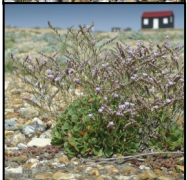
Annual sea-blite is succulent but with long leaves and 3mm flowers. Also shows autumn colours. **F** Jul-Aug.



***Sea heath** grows at upper margins of salt-marsh and the dark green leaves look a little like heather. It grows as a very short mat. Flowers are 5mm. **F** Jun-Sep.



Sea spurge grows on the shingle that is occasionally covered by the sea near the red roofed hut. Flowers are 15mm. Leaves go red in autumn. **F** Jul-Oct.



Rottingdean sea-lavender is native to Sicily, but here it is spreading across the shingle that is covered occasionally by the sea. The plant is 15cm tall. **F** Jul-Aug.



Sea wormwood grows at the upper level of the saltmarsh and has silvery leaves that smell of lavender when crushed. The flowers are the same colour and only 2mm. **F** Aug-Sep.



Sea purslane is the dominant plant of ungrazed, old saltmarsh. It is grey green all year. The flowers are golden, but only 2mm. **F** Jul-Sep.



Sea aster is like a Michaelmas-daisy and the flowers are in 2 forms, one with the long outer petals, the other without. Grows to 50cm. **F** Jul-Oct.



Sea-spurreys are 2 similar species with different sized flowers - lesser (6-8mm) and greater (photo, 8-12mm), but both are small and low growing. **F** Jun-Aug.



Sea beet grows to 50cm with shiny green leaves. Small flowers in branched groups. A close relative of beetroot and sugar beet. **F** Jul-Sep.



Coastal Grassland

Bird's-foot trefoil low growing plant with 3-lobed flowers. Seedpods resemble a bird's foot. **F** Jun-Sep.



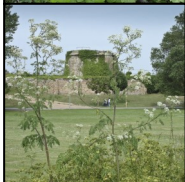
Goat's-beard has grass like leaves and flower spikes 30cm tall with a 30mm flower. The seedhead is a large white dandelion clock. **F** Jun-Aug.



Salsify is an escape from old kitchen gardens. It's a larger close relative of Goat's-beard and they sometimes hybridise. The seedhead is tennis ball size and brown. Both species flower in the morning **F** Jun-Aug.



Alexanders was introduced by the Romans because all parts are edible, including the black seeds. It's invasive so is managed. Grows to 150cm **F** Mar-Jun.



Hemlock is **poisonous** and can be recognised by the purple markings on the stem, a mousy smell and it can grow to over 200cm. **F** Jun-Jul.



Rock samphire grows to 25cm in a few places near the shore. It is edible and is the samphire of Shakespeare. **F** Jun-Aug.



Common whitlowgrass only 40mm tall with flowers 3mm. The tiny seedpods have a membrane like honesty and the tiny seeds are a favourite of Linnets. **F** Feb-Jun.



Early forget-me-not only 40mm tall and very hairy with blue 2mm flowers. **F** Apr-Jun.



Buck'shorn plantain grows as a flat rosette 2-10cm across and each leaf has a branched shape (=horn). Flowers are on long stems. **F** May-Jul.



Bee orchid has spikes to 20cm with flowers of 30mm. **F** Jun-Jul. There may also be **common spotted orchids** with smaller pale flowers and spotted leaves.



Ragwort flowers are 20mm. **The poisons in this plant can be absorbed through the skin**, but they are used by the stripy cinnabar moth caterpillars for protection. **F** Jun-Oct. There is also the very similar, but paler **hoary ragwort**.

Rye Harbour Nature Reserve has many special habitats: shingle, saltmarsh, saline lagoons, grazing marsh and reedbed. These are managed for more than 200 rare or endangered plants and animals and more than 4,000 other species. Some fencing on the shingle is designed to reduce the impact of rabbits on some of the rare flowering plants and this helps to maintain their populations and that of the very rare insects that live on them.

You can support our work by joining one or both charities;

Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve — supporting this reserve

Sussex Wildlife Trust — caring for wildlife across the whole of Sussex

Find out much more at www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/ryeharbour