

# Flower Guide

Identify beach flowers  
found on the Rhins of  
Galloway Coast Path





Bee feeding on Common Restharrow



This guide will help you identify 15 common seaside flowering plants found on shingle beaches and sand dunes along the Rhins of Galloway Coast Path. The more you look the more you will see so if a flower you discover does not match those in this guide then search the internet or a seashore nature book to help identify your find.

This flower guide has been produced as part of the Rhins of Galloway Coast Path project made possible with the Heritage Fund and managed by Dumfries and Galloway Council.



Cover: Dunes near Sandhead

# How to use this guide

Where the land meets the sea is always a demanding place for plants to survive because they must cope with a combination of wind, salt and lack of soil. Shingle and sand shift when exposed to extremes of weather making beaches one of the most precarious places to grow. Many flowering plants have adapted to tolerate harsh conditions and often have fleshy or hairy leaves and roots that penetrate deep below the surface in search of moisture.

This guide identifies the best months and route sections (see route map) to see each flower. Compare your find with the pictures in this guide; although the shape and colour may vary, the pictures show distinctive features which will help you identify your find.



Sea Sandwort





# Sea Bindweed

## *Calystegia soldanella*

1

**Looks:** This creeping plant with kidney-shaped glossy leaves has funnel-shaped pink and white striped flowers. It does not have tendrils like other bindweeds but is adapted to sand drift by having wide-spreading roots.

**Found:** Favours sand dunes but occasionally found on stabilised shingle.

**Easiest to see:** During the months of July and August in route sections 2, 3, 5 and 6.

.....

**Did you know?** The trumpet shaped flowers close before nightfall and reopen in the morning.

# Sea Radish

## Raphanus raphanistrum

**Looks:** A tall ungainly plant with robust hairy leaves topped by small yellow flowers and beaded seed pods.

**Found:** On many beaches but particularly common at the back of shingle beaches.

**Easiest to see:** During the months of June and July but flowers throughout the summer in route sections 3, 5 and 6.

---

**Did you know?** The edible leaves have a spicy flavour somewhere between cabbage, wasabi or radish and may give it some protection from being eaten by animals and insects.

2





## Sea Kale

*Crambe maritima*

**Looks:** Domes of thick purple-grey cabbage-like leaves with a waxy coating to reduce water loss. It has clusters of white flowers followed by spherical seeds.

3

**Found:** On the high tide line of shingle beaches.

**Easiest to see:** During the months of June, July and August in route sections 3, 5 and 6.

.....

**Did you know?** It can regenerate from detached pieces of its long fleshy root which contains more starch than a potato.



# Sea Sandwort

## *Honckenya peploides*

**Looks:** Matt of leathery pointed leaves with small, greenish-white flowers. Usually, the male and female flowers are on different plants but sometimes it has flowers with both male and female characteristics.

**Found:** On stabilised shingle and sandy beaches.

**Easiest to see:** During the months of June, July and August in all route sections.

---

**Did you know?** The deep root system has an abundance of buds that quickly send out new shoots if the plant is covered by sands shifted by storms.

4





# Frosted Orache

## *Atriplex laciniata*

**Looks:** A very distinctive sprawling plant with diamond-shaped leaves covered in a silver frosting which gives it its common name. It has clusters of tiny yellow-green flowers which are easily overlooked.

5

**Found:** On the strandline of sandy beaches.

**Easiest to see:** During the months of July, August and September in route sections 3, 5 and 6.

---

**Did you know?** This plant is extremely tolerant of salt and the frosting on the leaves helps to minimise evaporation.



# Sea Rocket

*Cakile maritima*

**Looks:** Straggly plant with thick leaves and delicate lilac or white flowers that are attractive to insects.

**Found:** On the strandline of sandy beaches, it can survive in places exposed to winds and tide.

**Easiest to see:** During the months of June, July, August and September in route sections 3, 5 and 6.

.....

**Did you know?** Sea rocket has to complete its life cycle quickly as it is often washed away in the first autumn storms.

6





## Silverweed

*Potentilla anserina*

**Looks:** A yellow flower with 5 petals on trailing red stems and fern-like leaves that often have a silvery colour

7

**Found:** Creeping over sand dunes and shingle even where the ground is disturbed or trampled.

**Easiest to see:** During the months of June, July and August in all route sections.

.....

**Did you know?** This plant has many traditional medicinal uses including as insoles for tired walkers and explains why it is sometimes called Traveller's ease and Traveller's joy.

# Common Restharrow

## *Ononis repens*

**Looks:** A creeping plant with clusters of pink pea-like flowers with sticky hairy leaves.

**Found:** Growing on sand dunes and short grass.

**Easiest to see:** During the months of July and August in route sections 3, 5 and 6.

.....

**Did you know?** The name refers to the tough network of roots that could stop a harrow during the days of horse-drawn cultivation. Like other species from the Pea family, restharrow has bacteria associated with its roots that fix nitrogen from the air.

8







## Biting Stonecrop

*Sedum acre*

**Looks:** A matt forming plant with fleshy leaves that can survive in very dry conditions. It has bright yellow star-like flowers.

9

**Found:** On well drained sandy soils.

**Easiest to see:** During the months of June and July in route sections 1, 5 and 6.

---

**Did you know?** The leaves have a sharp peppery taste which is referred to in the common name 'biting' and the Latin name acre meaning acrid or bitter.

# Pyramidal Orchid

## *Anacamptis pyramidalis*

**Looks:** A densely packed pyramid of pinky-purple flowers held on a green stem.

**Found:** On warm well drained soils usually behind sand dunes.

**Easiest to see:** During the months of June and July in route section 3.

---

**Did you know?** Like many orchids the seeds do not store enough food to grow on their own and rely on fungus in the soil to supply nutrients.

10





## Common Birds-Foot-Trefoil

### *Lotus corniculatus*

**Looks:** Sprawling plant with clusters of yellow pea-like flowers and downy leaflets. The black seed pods are splayed like a bird's foot when ripe.

11

**Found:** On short grass at the top of beaches and cliffs.

**Easiest to see:** During the months of June, July and August in all route sections.

.....

**Did you know?** Common names include “eggs and bacon” which refer to the variable colours of the flowers and buds that are often tinged orange and red.



# Sea Beet

## Beta vulgaris

**Looks:** A sprawling clump of glossy green leaves with small fleshy flowers along the stems.

**Found:** Growing on many habitats particularly shingle beaches.

**Easiest to see:** During the months of July, August and September in route sections 1, 3, 4 and 5.

---

**Did you know?** Also known as “wild spinach” it has edible leaves and is a close relative to sugar-beet, chard and beetroot. It is believed to have been first cultivated about 2000 years ago in the Middle East.

12





## Common Knotgrass

*Polygonum aviculare*

**Looks:** Branched sprawling plant with oval leathery leaves and tiny flowers in the base of the leaf that wither to expose a nut-like seed. Ray's knot grass is very similar but is more robust with protruding seeds.

13

**Found:** Growing on bare shingle and sand.

**Easiest to see:** During the months of July, August and September in route sections 1, 5 and 6.

---

**Did you know?** This plant was once believed to provide relief to people stung by venomous creatures.

# Wood Vetch

*Vicia sylvatica*

**Looks:** A sprawling plant with tendrils and pea-flowers that are white veined with blue. The fruit is like a small black pea pod.

**Found:** Growing on shingle beaches.

**Easiest to see:** During the months of July and August in route section 5.

.....

**Did you know?** Despite the common name and its habit of growing in woods and hedges in other places this plant is only found on beaches in the Rhins of Galloway.

14







## Herb-Robert

*Geranium robertianum*

**Looks:** Low growing plant with small pink and white striped flowers. The mat of leaves often turns red later in the year.

**Found:** A plant that will grow almost anywhere including shingle beaches.

**Easiest to see:** During the months of May, June, July and August in route sections 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6.

**Did you know?** Stinking Bob is another name for this common plant because the foliage has a rather unpleasant smell when crushed.

# Enjoy your search for seashore flowers

You will find many more seashore plants on the Rhins of Galloway coast than are featured in this guide, some so scarce that they are protected. It is always a good idea to take a photograph which you can refer to for later identification.



Remember a wild flower always looks better in the ground than in your hand



Pyramidal Orchid



83 mile

circular walking route  
on Scotland's south  
west coast

Find out more about  
the Rhins of Galloway  
Coast Path by visiting:  
[dgitrails.org](http://dgitrails.org)



### Route Sections

- 1 Stranraer - Corsewall
- 2 Corsewall - Portpatrick
- 3 Portpatrick - Port Logan
- 4 Port Logan - Mull of Galloway
- 5 Mull of Galloway - Ardwell
- 6 Ardwell - Stranraer