

# 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

## HABITAT

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

## FEATURES

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



Otakaha Stream, Palliser Bay. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe

## 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/>