

Common viper's bugloss

Echium vulgare

Description

It was introduced to the United States in the early 1800's.

Habit

Biennial or short-lived monocarpic perennial. Can grow up to 36 inches tall.

Leaves

Initially forms as a basal rosette. Rosette leaves are simple, entire, oblanceolate, approx. 2.5 to 10 in. in length and 0.5-3 in. wide with a single vein and short petiole. Stem leaves are alternate, sessile, linear-lanceolate and become progressively smaller toward the top. Covered in stout, spreading hairs that have a swollen red, purple or black base, underlain by smaller hairs.

Stems



Mature plants grow one to many erect, branching, flowering stems reaching over 36 inches in height. Covered in stout, spreading hairs that have a swollen red, purple or black base, underlain by smaller hairs.

Flowers

Showy, range in size from 0.4 to 0.8 inch. Funnel-shaped, five-lobed flowers are typically bright blue, but may also be purple, pink or rarely, white. Another identifying characteristic is the five pink or red stamens, one of which is noticeably short than the other four, which extend beyond the corolla tube.

Fruits and Seeds

Seeds are known as nutlets. They are brown or gray in color with a rounded pyramid shape, and are very small, less than 0.10 in in diameter. The surface is rough and very hard.

Habitat

Native to southern Europe. Commonly found in disturbed areas and overgrazed range or pastureland.

Reproduction

Seeds are dispersed via, wind, water, animals and humans. Wind can distribute seeds up to 16 ft.

Similar

Can be mistaken for threadleaf phacelia (*Phacelia linearis*), Common bugloss (*Anchusa officinalis*) or Houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*) but can be distinguished by its spotted stems.

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Pulling or digging by hand works well for smaller infestations if soil is moist. Care should be taken when hand pulling to ensure the tap root is removed, because this plant can regenerate if the root remains.

Credits

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