

FLOWER GUIDE



COMMON REED

Phragmites australis

This tall grass with its plume-like heads forms large stands in damp ground and shallow waters. It grows in freshwater but can also tolerate brackish conditions. It has been used for many purposes including purification of sewage effluent, thatching and even as a medicine.



SEA LETTUCE

Limonium sp.

With lettuce-like leaves and long stems bearing tiny pink or white flowers, often used in dried flower arrangements, this plant can survive salty soils by 'sweating' salt-filled droplets from pores on the undersides of the leaves. It is only found in the Eastern Mediterranean.



ESPARTO GRASS

Lygeum spartum

A grass with spikey flowers from March to May. As well as protecting the soil from erosion it has been used in basketry, bedding for animals and to make paper and rope.



GOLDEN SAMPHIRE

Inula crithmoides

A bush with fleshy leaves and yellow daisy-like flowers from May to September. It is adapted to life by the sea and in salt marshes but is also drought tolerant. The young leaves have been eaten in salads and as a vegetable.



BLACK BOG-RUSH

Schoenus nigricans (photo) / *Juncus sp.*

A grass-like plant with tufted black spikes topping dark green stems. It lives in the wettest parts of the sand dunes. Its thin leaves lose little moisture and the tips can also trap droplets of water aiding survival in drought conditions.



EVERLASTING SUNGOLD

Helichrysum stoechas

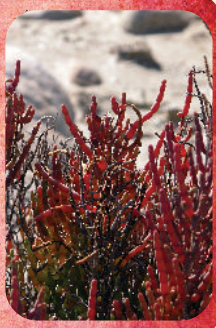
A perennial with silvery-green leaves which emit a strong curry-like smell when rubbed. The flowers are yellow and long-lasting making this a popular garden plant. It can be found in the dunes where it flowers from April to August.



GLASSWORT, SALTWORKS

Sarcocornia sp. / *Arthrocnemum macrostachyum*

A bush with branches that turn from green to red as they fill with salt, thus enabling their survival in saline soils. In France it is commonly eaten in salads and here in Spain was used to make caustic soda for the manufacture of soap and glass.



ALEPPO PINE

Pinus halepensis

Although generally common in the Mediterranean, these trees were originally planted in 1917 to conserve the sand dunes and prevent the sand from covering the salt pans. The contorted and stumpy growth form is the result of the strong 'viento de levante' or east wind.



MARMENOR ROCKROSE

Helianthemum marminorense

With white flowers and petals like tissue-paper this small rockrose flowers from December to May. This species is only found around the Mar Menor and in the Regional Park where it is protected from the pressures of trampling and development.



MEDITERRANEAN BUCKTHORN

Rhamnus lycioides

A spiny, tangled shrub with greyish bark. Its perennial leaves are long and thin and flowers can be found between March and May. With shade and humidity provided by the pines, it can survive in the sand dunes of the park.



MARRAM GRASS

Ammophila arenaria

A grass with stiff long leaves which roll up to prevent loss of water, flowering from May to July. It lives close to the beach in the mobile dunes and its anchoring network of underground rhizomes enable it to live in shifting sand.



SEA HOLLY

Eryngium maritimum

Growing on the beach, the leaves of sea holly have an impermeable layer as a defence against sea spray as well as large spines to deter herbivores. Its small flowers are grouped together forming striking blue clusters from May onwards.



MASTIC TREE

Pistacia lentiscus

A densely branched resinous shrub with perennial dark-green leaves. Flowers can be found between March and June and the fruit is a small berry, turning from red to black as it matures. The plant yields a resin which can be used as a varnish, in dentistry, as chewing gum and also to flavour liquors.



SEA DAFFODIL

Pancratium maritimum

This bulbous plant flowers between July and August and for the rest of the year, only the strap-like green leaves are visible. Its large white, daffodil-like flowers have a sweet scent but only stay open for a single day.



SEA ROCKET

Cakile maritima

A herbaceous plant with fleshy, wavy-edged leaves. It flowers from March to October with the petals turning from white to lilac. The fruits look like caterpillars and float in the sea. Young shoots taste of watercress and are eaten in salads.



COASTAL PHOENICIAN JUNIPER

Juniperus turbinata

A small tree which can reach a height of 8 metres. It has small scale-like leaves with green to brown berry-like cones. Formerly it was found all around the Mar Menor but now is in danger of extinction because of the disappearance of natural sand dunes.



CRETA TREFOIL

Lotus creticus

With yellow crown-like flowers from February to June, this plant lives close to the ground where it is sheltered from the sea winds. The silvery-green colour of the leaves comes from tiny hairs which enable it to survive both high salinity and drought.



NEPTUNE GRASS

Posidonia oceanica

The brown remains of this Mediterranean sea grass line the edge of the beach forming 'arribazones' or mounds which protect against coastal erosion. Within the water, Neptune grass meadows clean the water and provide cover and food for hundreds of marine creatures, many of which are eaten by man.



HOW TO ENJOY THE FLOWERS AND RESPECT THEIR HABITAT

- * The flowers are best appreciated from the pathways. The wooden boardwalks over the dunes help to conserve these fragile habitats.
- * Watch with patience and silence – you will see more wildlife.
- * A photograph or drawing is the best memory of your visit. Collection of plants is prohibited.
- * Please help to keep the Nature Reserve free of litter. Use reusable containers and bottles.

