

Flower Guide

Identify clifftop flowers
found on the Rhins of
Galloway Coast Path





Wild Thyme

This guide will help you identify 15 common seaside flowering plants found on cliffs 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 managed by Dumfries and Galloway Council.



Cover: Sheep's-bit on clifftop

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. Bare rock faces are particularly exposed to extremes of weather making clifftops even more precarious. Many flowering plants have adapted to tolerate harsh conditions and flourish in places where larger less tolerant plants struggle to survive.

The guide identifies the best time of year and sections of the walk 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 what you have found.



English Stonecrop



Spring Squill

Scilla verna

Looks: This low growing plant has a cluster of starry blue flowers on short upright stems which appear in the spring.

Found: On exposed areas of short, dry, grassy areas, it often forms large colonies which brings a violet-bluish haze to the clifftops.

Easiest to see: During the month of May in route sections 2, 3, 4.



Did you know?

It thrives in gardens far from the sea but in the wild its requirement for a very short grass sward means it is found almost exclusively on coastal clifftops.

Common Scurvygrass

Cochlearia officinalis

Looks: The glossy, kidney-shaped leaves are often hidden by a mat of small white flowers.

Found: On most types of coastal habitat from rocky crevices to the back of shingle beaches.

Easiest to see: During the month of May but flowers throughout the summer in route sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Did you know? Rich in vitamin C, it was eaten by sailors to stay healthy during long sea voyages.

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Thrift (Sea Pinks)

Armeria maritima

Looks: Thin leaves with a rounded head of pretty, pink flowers on a long stalk.

Found: As a compact cushion on rocky shores and cliffs.

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Easiest to see: During the months of May, June and July in route sections 1, 2, 3, 4.



Did you know? Featured on the reverse side of the old threepence coin - perhaps a play on the phrase to be thrifty.

Sea Campion

Silene uniflora

Looks: Sprawling grey leaves and delicate white flowers with a veined bladder.

Found: On clifftops, rocky shores and shingle banks.

Easiest to see: During the months of June, July and August in route sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Did you know? Superstition says picking the flowers tempts death – it would certainly be risky to pick them from clifftops!

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Sea Mayweed

Tripleurospermum maritimum

Looks: Large daisy flowers and sprawling divided, fleshy leaves.

Found: On most types of coastal habitat from rocky crevices to the back of shingle beaches.

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Easiest to see: During the months of June, July and August but continues to flower late in the year in route sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.



Did you know? Unlike many other flowers of the camomile family sea mayweed has no scent.

Wild Carrot

Daucus carota

Looks: The umbrella-like white heads have forked leaf bracts under the flower and often feature a single purple flower in their centres.

Found: On dry grassy cliff top slopes.

Easiest to see: During the months of June, July and August in route sections 2, 3, 4, 5.

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Did you know? The purple spot is thought to resemble a small fly and may attract more insect pollinators to the flower.

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Bloody Crane's-bill

Geranium sanguineum

Looks: A splash of brilliant magenta makes this flower stand out.

Found: In grassland on dry sea-cliff slopes.

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Easiest to see: During the months of June, July and August in route sections 3, 4.

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Did you know? Both “bloody” and the specific name “sanguineum” mean the same, referring to the colour of the plant’s stalk-joints although the leaves also tend to turn red in autumn.

Rock Sea-spurrey

Spergularia rupicola

Looks: Small pale pink flowers with yellow stamens and fleshy pointed leaves.

Found: Growing in crevices, on ledges and thin soils on cliffs and rocks.

Easiest to see: During the months of June and July in route sections 2, 3, 4.

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Did you know? Easily confused with other spurreys the main difference is that the petals are entirely pink – and it grows on rocks!

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Scot's Lovage

Ligusticum scoticum

Looks: The umbrella-like white flower heads have reddish stems with glossy leaves.

Found: On grassy slopes and rock crevices close to the sea.

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Easiest to see: During the months of June and July in route sections 2, 3, 4.



Did you know? The Scots element of the name is very appropriate as the plant is virtually absent south of the Scottish border.

Sheep's-bit

Jasione montana

Looks: Small pompom shaped heads of densely packed blue flowers.

Found: On grassy slopes and clifftops.

Easiest to see: During the months of June and July in route sections 2, 3, 4.

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Did you know? The nectar rich flowers are particularly noticeable in ultraviolet light that is visible to bees and other pollinators.

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English Stonecrop

Sedum anglicum

Looks: White starry flowers on a dense matt of succulent leaves that turn red.

Found: On rocky outcrops where it grows in dry crevices.

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Easiest to see: During the months of July and August in route sections 2, 3, 4, 5.



Did you know? Despite the name this is a common wildflower on the coast of western Scotland.

Golden Samphire

Inula crithmoides

Looks: A bright yellow daisy-like flower with a fleshy stem that grows in small clumps.

Found: On cliffs near the Mull of Galloway.

Easiest to see: During the months of July and August in route section 4.

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Did you know? The warmth loving plant reaches its northernmost range on the Rhins and is the only place in Scotland it can be found.

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Rock Samphire

Crithmum maritimum

Looks: Grey-green fleshy leaves with umbrella-like whitish flower heads.

Found: In crevices on cliffs and occasionally on shingle.

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Easiest to see: During the months of July and August in route section 4.

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Did you know? The name samphire is derived from the French name *herbe de Saint Pierre* after Peter the biblical fisherman.

Kidney Vetch

Anthyllis vulneraria

Looks: Numerous little yellow flowers each one surrounded at the base by thick down giving the flower head a woolly appearance.

Found: Growing on thin soils on grassy slopes and clifftops.

Easiest to see: During the months of July and August in route sections 2, 3, 4.

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Did you know? The latin name 'vulneraria' means 'wound healer' but the common name is derived from a belief that it could cure kidney diseases.

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Wild Thyme

Thymus polytrichus

Looks: Low growing mat of tiny pinky-purple flowers.

Found: Growing on thin soils on grassy slopes, rocky outcrops and clifftops.

15

Easiest to see: During the months of July and August in route sections 2, 3, 4.

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Did you know? This aromatic plant is irresistible to many insects.

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



Rock Samphire



83 mile
circular walking route
on Scotland's south
west coast



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