

Vipers Bugloss (Borage)

Echium vulgare

Echium vulgare (Viper's Bugloss) is a bristly, biennial weed (up to 1.2m) known for its blue/pink flowers, deep taproot, and stiff, prickly hairs. It thrives in dry, disturbed soils, pastures, and roadsides, forming dense infestations that reduce pasture productivity and are toxic to livestock.

Identification

Leaves: Basal leaves are narrow, long (up to 15 cm), lance-shaped, and arranged in a rosette. They are covered with coarse, stiff, white bristly hairs, giving them a rough, dimpled, or spotted appearance. Stem leaves are smaller, stalkless, and alternate.

Flowers: Funnel-shaped, 12-18 mm long, and usually vivid blue (sometimes pink in bud or rarely white). They appear in, one-sided, coiled, spike-like clusters.

Stamens: Four long red stamens protrude from the blue flowers.

Stems: Erect, often reddish-speckled, and covered in stiff, prickly hairs.

Roots: Deep taproot.

Habitat: Common in disturbed, dry, stony soils, roadsides, and neglected pastures.

Control

Herbicides: Spot spray or broadcast with 2,4-D amine, Metsulfuron-methyl (1g per 10L), or Triclopyr. **Best Time:** Apply during spring or autumn when plants are in the rosette stage. **Surfactant:** Use a surfactant with herbicide mixes to ensure coverage on the hairy leaves. **Systemic Control:** Weed Weapon Extra Strength is effective for killing root systems.

Digging/Pulling: Dig out young rosettes, ensuring the entire taproot is removed.

Mowing: Cut plants before flowering to prevent seeding, though this may require multiple, low-level passes to manage regrowth.

