

Echium lycopsis

[Synonyms : *Echium maritimum*, *Echium plantagineum*]

PURPLE VIPER’S-BUGLOSS is an invasive annual or biennial. Native to Asia and Europe (including Britain although rare there now) and especially the Mediterranean, it has blue changing to purple through pink to white flowers.

It is also known as *Blå snokört* (Swedish), Bugloss, *Buglosse* (French), *Chupamieles* (Spanish), *Grásse-g'linne* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Lsien il-fart vjola* (Maltese), *Lycopside des champs* (French), Paterson’s curse, *Pers Echium* (Afrikaans), Purple bugloss, Purple echium, Salvation Jane, *Vipérine pourpre* (French), and Viper’s-bugloss.

The flowers are attractive to bees.

Warning – the whole of purple viper’s-bugloss is potentially poisonous and must not be taken internally. The hairs can cause dermatitis. It can also be poisonous for animals (sheep deaths have been reported in Australia.)

Purple viper’s-bugloss is considered to be threatened in the wild in Britain.

Lycopsis is derived from Greek *lyco-* (wolf) and *-opsis* (likeness) components.

One authority illustrates the plant’s invasive nature by noting its introduction to Australia (where reports have been made of sheep poisoning). Within 8 years of it being grown there as a new garden plant it had escaped and spread across arable land and pastures for a distance of over 500 miles. No wonder the Australians christened it ‘Paterson’s curse’. [This invasive quality is also rearing its head in South Africa to the displeasure of South Africans too.]