
Raasay's Saltmarsh Plants – Part 2

In the ninth of a series of articles on Raasay's flora, botanist STEPHEN BUNGARD takes another look at Saltmarsh Plants.

Last month I described some of the specialist plants that enjoy regular soaking with salt water. Here are a few more that you can find at Oskaig.

Aster tripolium (Sea Aster) has flowers like Michaelmas Daisy but in a well-grazed saltmarsh like Oskaig, it is tricky to spot a flower. The fleshy leaves are easier to find, though there are only a few well down the shore. The picture shows ungrazed plants from Skye. There is also another plant with purple flowers, *Spergularia media* (Greater Sea-spurrey), but this is much smaller in all parts.



Sea Arrowgrass and Sea Aster (c. S Bungard)

When young, *Triglochin maritima* (Sea Arrowgrass) can be used a bit like chives - though it tastes of coriander. Two similar plants are also to be found in the saltmarsh: *Triglochin palustris* (Marsh Arrowgrass) and *Plantago maritima* (Sea Plantain). Leaves of both of these are said to be edible too. Leaves from both Arrowgrass species can contain a toxic compound, especially during and after drought. Plants growing in Britain are said to be perfectly safe (usually). Also, don't eat Sea Plantain seeds unless you are looking for a laxative effect.



Blysmus rufus (c. R Barendse, www.freenatureimages.eu)

Blysmus rufus (Saltmarsh Flat-sedge) forms dark green, almost bluish patches in the saltmarsh and has a distinctive dark brown, flat inflorescence. As well as at Oskaig there is a good colony at the mouth of the Arish Burn.

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