

# COMMON BUGLOSS

## *Anchusa officinalis* L.

**Family:** *Boraginaceae* (Borage).

**Other Scientific Names:** None.

**Other Common Names:** Common alkanet.

**Legal Status:** Regional Noxious: Kootenay/Boundary.



## Identification

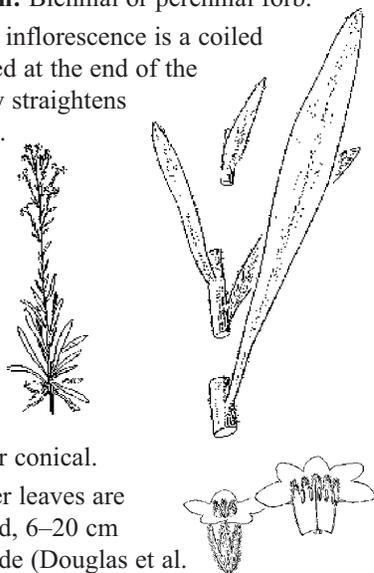
**Growth form:** Biennial or perennial forb.

**Flower:** The inflorescence is a coiled cluster located at the end of the stalk. The coil gradually straightens as the flower buds open.

The tubular flowers are initially reddish but eventually turn deep purplish blue with white centres.

**Seeds/Fruit:** Each flower produces a cluster of 4 barbless nutlets. The nutlets are squat and asymmetric or conical.

**Leaves:** Basal and lower leaves are stalked and lance-shaped, 6–20 cm long and 1.0–5.0 cm wide (Douglas et al. 1998). The stem leaves become gradually smaller upward and lack stalks. The leaves are



succulent and covered with stiff hairs (BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Undated).

**Stems:** Plants often have several stems and grow 30–80 cm tall. The angular stems are covered with spreading hairs.

**Roots:** Long taproot.

**Seedling:** No information available.



### Similar Species

**Exotics:** European bugloss (*Anchusa arvensis*) and Italian bugloss (*Anchusa azurea*) also occur in BC, but they have very limited distribution and only a few specimens have been found. Common hound's-tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*) has a similar appearance, but it has only a single stem per plant, the inflorescences do not uncoil, and the nutlets are strongly barbed.

**Natives:** Northern hound's-tongue (*Cynoglossum boreale*) also resembles common bugloss, but it has more leaves that are rounded, the inflorescences do not uncoil, and the nutlets are barbed.

## Impacts

**Agricultural:** This weed invades pastures and hay lands, where it reduces carrying capacity and yield. It causes spoilage in baled alfalfa hay because the succulent leaves and stems become mouldy. Common bugloss is not a problem in cultivated crops.

**Ecological:** Invades rangelands and disturbed areas where competing vegetation is sparse.

**Human:** No information available.

## Habitat and Ecology

**General requirements:** Commonly found on dry, fertile, lime-free, well-drained soils. It frequently occurs on warm, sandy, and gravelly glacial out-wash soils (BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Undated). Found on roadsides, dry fields, pastures, and disturbed areas in BC.

**Distribution:** Common bugloss occurs only rarely in south-central BC and southern Vancouver Island. The largest infestations are near Rock Creek and the Rutland-Black Mountain area near Kelowna, and other sightings have been noted in the south Okanagan and Keremeos areas. It is also found in northern Washington.

**Historical:** Introduced from Europe.

**Life cycle:** This perennial forms a rosette of basal leaves in its first year. A single flowering stalk is formed in the second year and multiple stalks appear in subsequent years.

**Mode of reproduction:** Primarily by seed but root fragments will re-sprout.

**Seed production:** A single plant can produce about 900 seeds annually.

**Seed bank:** No information available.

**Dispersal:** Ingestion of seeds by animals and seed-bearing stalks being tumbled in the wind. Vehicles, animal and human feet, redistribution of soils and gravels, and contaminated hay.

**Hybridization:** None known.

## Management

---

**Biocontrol:** None.

**Mechanical:** Cutting or mowing before plants flower will prevent seed production. Flowering stalks should be bagged, removed from the site, and burned.

**Fire:** Fire can destroy above-ground parts of the plant but will not affect the deep taproot and seeds in the seed bank.

**Herbicides:** **No specific recommendations.** Consult the most recent edition of BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Crop Production Guides for specific recommendations. **Before applying herbicides, read the label for full use and precautionary instructions.**

**Cultural/Preventive:** Small populations could be hand-pulled. Pulling is easier in young plants before the deep taproot has developed. Monitor disturbed sites, especially on sandy or gravelly areas, for new outbreaks. Inspect purchased hays and monitor stock feeding areas. Remove any new infestations

immediately by pulling or cutting, and destroy any flowering stalks. Clean equipment, vehicles, and footwear before leaving an infested area. Maintaining a strong population of native perennials is the best way to prevent the establishment of common bugloss.

### Integrated Management Summary

Early detection is important because this plant has a limited distribution in BC. Hand-pull plants and remove from the site before a seed bank can establish. Seed disturbed areas to perennial grasses and forbs to provide cover and competition against common bugloss. Manage grazing animals to maintain perennial plant communities.

## References

---

BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Undated. Weed Alert. Common Bugloss.

Douglas, G. W., D. Meidinger, and J. Pojar. 1998. *Illustrated Flora of British Columbia*. Vol. 2:

*Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons (Balsaminaceae through Cuscutaceae)*. Province of British Columbia.

