

EXPLORE THE NATURAL FLORAL TREASURES OF ALION

Cyprus due to its special location in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea has a very interesting wealth of flora, which includes a lot of endemic and rare species of plants. The Cypriot flora comprises about 1800 indigenous plant taxa (species, sub species, varieties etc.) of which seven per cent are endemics.

It is generally accepted that Cyprus flora is as rich as that of other Mediterranean countries and naturally it is much richer than that of countries of Central and Northern Europe where ecological conditions are generally less variable.

In this respect, Cypriots can feel proud of their county's natural wealth, but it would be wonderful if we could be equally proud of the measures taken to conserve this precious heritage.

There is, regrettably, increasing evidence that Cyprus has already lost an unknown number of plants over the past three decades, especially along the coastline. For the sake of tourist development, sand dunes have been levelled and a lot of plants have been cleared off to give way to extensive bathing beaches.

We at the Alion Beach Hotel strive to establish a balance between the intensive beach use and the need for protection of the natural sea shore eco system; hence we commit ourselves to engage in a constant effort of preserving and increasing our natural floral treasures.

However, for the success of this part of our environmental programme (Environmental Management System ISO 14001) for the protection of nature, it is indispensable that our guests as well as our personnel should be actively involved. I am very confident that this leaflet will make a substantial contribution to a wider effort for the protection of our valuable natural heritage.

All information for the preparation of this leaflet were taken from the book "Plants of Cyprus – Walking around Cape Greco" by Mr Efthimios Efthimiou and "The Endemic Plants of Cyprus" published by the Bank of Cyprus. Both these books are available in our hotel library for further study.

Plant Life

The coastal area, which includes a narrow belt of 50-150 m in width along the coast, is one of the six main groups of plant habitats in Cyprus.

This sandy sea shores are quite hostile for plant life due to 3 critical factors:

- Drought
- High temperature
- Salinity (Sea spray and sand salt content)



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*Sea Daffodil
Pancratium maritimum*

July - October

When the loose sand of the coastal dunes is burning hot under the glaring August sun the beautiful white Sea Lily, a member of the daffodil family, burst into flower amidst this miniature dessert. Like the Sea squill, the flowers come as a surprise after the leaves have died down. Where this flower occurs it presents an unforgettable sight, its white spider-like flowers dancing on the coastal sands in the fresh breezes

The vegetation is mostly low and sparse and it is composed of plants, which are adapted to the specific ecological conditions prevailing near the coast, characterised mainly by the high salinity of soil and air.

The local plants can be generally distinguished in two groups

1. The drought evading plants, which during the summer period rest in the form of seed, bulbs or fleshy roots until moisture, temperature and length of day light, signal them to reappear. Such plants are the Sea Daffodil (bulbous) and the annual; the Hare's tail grass and the Sea Rocket(seed)
2. The endives, which cope with these harsh conditions with various adaptations:
 - Many have white or silvery leaf surface that reflects the sun.
 - Have succulent leaves and other plant tissues.
 - Have thick waxy skin over leaves.
 - Have folding leaves i.e. leaf surface rolling with the stomata (openings of the surface of the leaves, through which air enters) on the insight.
 - Have enormous elongation of the tap root that reaches underground water.
 - Closing the leaf stomata during the hot day time.



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Galatohorton Euphorbia Cassia

May – October

Perennial herb, up to 50 cm high. Leaves alternate, sessile, simple, entire stipules absent. The flowers are several male and one female consisting of single stamens or ovaries.



Sea Rocket

Cakile maritime

February – July

A spreading annual herb, commonly found along our beaches.

Its leaves are fleshy and variable in shape; it has pale mauve or white flowers.



Sea Medick

Medicago Marina

February – April

Perennial plant of sandy seashores and sand- dunes. A densely white woolly plant with rounded heads of bright pale- yellow flowers and corkscrew shaped pods.

It is a very successful sand binder, equipped with a very long, tough, thong like tap root.



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Zygophyllum Album

March – May

Maritime scrub up to 1m with fleshy, paired and thick leaves.

Flowers solitary or in pairs.



Polionatos

Polygonum equisetiforme

April – October

Sprawling or decumbent, perennial herb, with a woody rootstock.

The leaves are long, simple. Stipules united into a membranous, tubular lacerate sheath, around but not covering the stem.



Parachosti

Centaurea aegialophila

March - August

Perennial herb with a thick, tuberous taproot. The leaves are not spiny. Involucre of numerous, imbricate phyllaries; phyllaries with hyaline-membranous margin and a rigid apical spinule. All flowers are tubular, pink or mauve-purple.





Medicago littoralis

February – March

Prostrate or ascending, annual herb. The leaves stipules margins dentate – laciniate with leaflets pilose on both surfaces. Flower with yellow or orange petals.



Mannuin

Echium angustifolium

February - July

Erect or sprawling perennial herb 15 – 50 cm high with a woody rootstock. The leaves alter simple, bristly inflorescence irregularly branched. The flowers are corolla red or purple depending on the age.



Phagnalon rupestre

March – may

Erect or sprawling subshrub with woody stems. The leaves are capitula solitary, involucre moth with phyllaries scarious and glossy. Florets all tubular.



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Sea Holly
Eryngium maritimum

June – September

Perennial up to 50 cm high. Tiny metallic blue flowers crowd a thistle like flower head. Spiny, bluish green leaves are edged with white. Its roots are edible.

For more information regarding the local group of plants, or our environmental activities, kindly contact our General Manager, Panicos Michael at panicos.michael@alion-beach.com.cy.

