

Thrift or Sea Pink

Scientific name:

Armeria maritima

Irish Name: Rabhán

In Ireland, people know this coastal plant by two different names—Thrift or Sea Pink. It is probably the best known and best loved of all coastal plants. Though widespread and common by the sea, it is also found on mountains.

Thrift has narrow, grass-like, fleshy leaves. These leaves are especially adapted to growing by the sea (see below). The plants grow in a dense, low-growing cushiony mat. This means they are less effected by the wind. From this cushion of leaves, scented flowers grow on thin stems. The roundish button flowerheads each consist of a cluster of tiny flowers. Once the flowers fade, papery, funnel-shaped sepals remain.

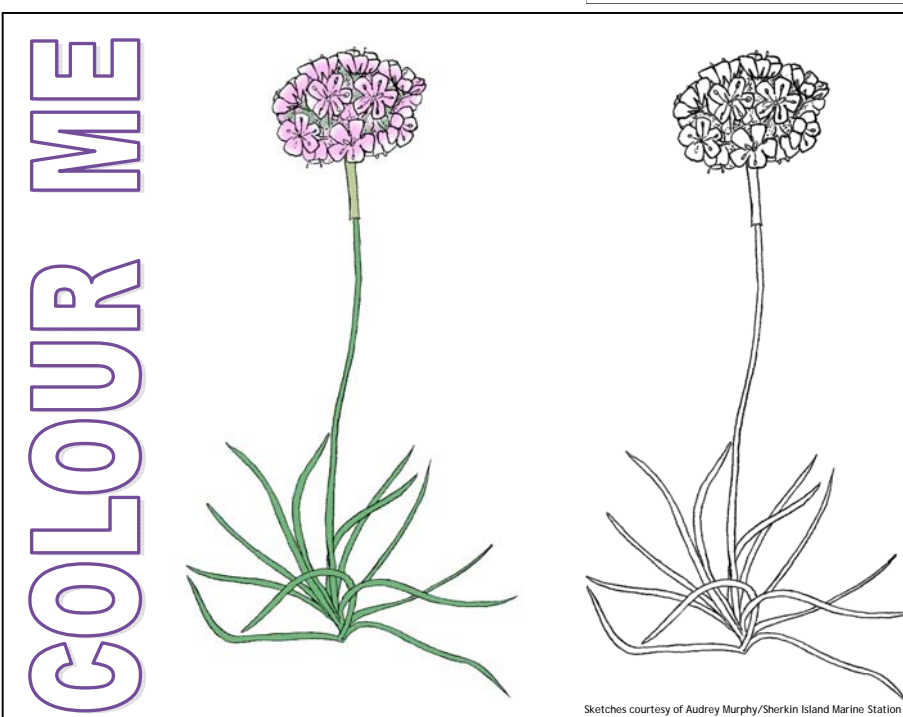
Thrift is a perennial plant. It has thick woody roots, which produce flowers year after year.



Images courtesy of Robbie Murphy

Adapting to Life on the Coast

Some plants near the sea try to ensure that as little surface area as possible is exposed to the drying effects of the sun and wind. Thrift is one of these and its small, narrow leaves help reduce water loss through evaporation.



Sketches courtesy of Audrey Murphy/Sherkin Island Marine Station

FACT FILE

Habitat: Coastal areas, cliffs, rocks and salt-marshes.

Colour: Pink.

Height: 10–20 cm.

In flower: Thrift comes into flower from April to August.

Distribution: The Thrift family of plants is found worldwide.