

***Borago officinalis* L.**
Borraginaceae



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■ Morphological description

Borago officinalis is an annual with a branched erect stem 50 cm. high. Its leaves are simple; the lower leaves are set in a rosette, with long petiolations, while the upper leaves are clasping and sessile.

The limb is thick and wrinkled, ovoid-lanceolated; both sides and the branches are covered with stiff, almost prickly, hairs. The big flowers, grouped in abundant cymes, hang on long 5-30 mm. peduncles. The calyx has lanceolated linear divisions. The corolla is wheeled and a pure blue; the anther is dark violet. The fruit is a big nutlet, with many ridges. Flowering is from March to September.

■ Geographical distribution

Local: Fairly widespread, no further south than Sousse and Feriana.

Regional: North Africa.

Global: A native of Asia Minor, widespread in central and southern Europe and in North Africa.

■ Ecology

A tough plant growing on waste ground near dwellings.

***Borago officinalis* L.** Sp. Pl.: 137, 1753

Arabic: Bourâache, boukhriche

French: Bourrache officinale

English: Common borage

■ Status, conservation and culture

Borago officinalis grows wild and has never been cultivated in Tunisia. For use, it is picked. However, it could be multiplied by being sown in the autumn or spring on the spot in sunny places. It is sensitive to nitrates and potassium. The flowers are picked when they open and the leaves after flowering is finished.

■ Part used

Leaves, flowers, and seeds.

■ Constituents

The leaves contain 30% of neutral mucilage, vitamin C, 3% of tannins, 2% of soluble silicic acid, and potassium nitrate. The flowers particularly contain pyrrolizidinic alkaloids. The seeds contain oils (35%) that are rich in unsaturated fatty acids.

■ Traditional medicine

The flowers and flowering tips of borage are used as an emollient, particularly as a sudorific and a diuretic. The decoction is used for flu.

■ Use in herbal medicine

The leaves, stems and flowering tips are sudorific, laxative and diuretic. The flowers themselves are diaphoretic. The oil of the seeds is used in cosmetology.

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