



Garrigue dominated with Mediterranean Thyme and Sea Squill

Phrygana dominated with Maltese Shrubby Kidney Vetch

English:  
Garrigue

Maltese:  
*ix-xagħri*

Garrigue is characterised by limestone rocky ground with a rugged surface, known as karst, and is heavily exposed to the brute force of the elements. It is typified by low-lying, usually aromatic and spiny woody shrubs that are resistant to drought and exposure. This type of habitat appears desolate, and is often referred to as wasteland; nevertheless it is probably the most species-diverse habitat of Malta, and is of great importance not only to biodiversity, but also to ecosystem services.

Various types of garrigue occur - the most frequent being the Maltese phrygana, which is usually a low-lying garrigue, of up to 0.5 m (sometimes more). It includes shrubs of eastern Mediterranean affinity which are very resistant to the elements and may shed their leaves in summer in case of extreme drought. The Maltese phrygana is characterised by two endemic species known only from Malta in the world - the Maltese Shrubby Kidney Vetch (*il-hatba s-sewda*) and the Maltese Spurge (*it-tengħud tax-xagħri*).

Amongst other types of garrigue, one finds the thermo-Mediterranean scrub habitats, with the Tree Spurge (*it-tengħud tas-siġra*) and African wolfsbane (*is-siġra tal-harir*). The thermo-Mediterranean scrub communities are sometimes referred to as high garrigues, since they usually include shrubs exceeding 0.5 m and growing up to 2 m in height. Additionally, some garrigue types are very rare, such as those based on species of sage (*is-salva*), rosemary (*il-klin*) and rockroses (*iċ-ċistu*).

On the other hand, the most frequent garrigue species is the Mediterranean Thyme (*is-sagħtar*). It is known from most types of garrigue, and is an important food source for many species, including the Maltese Honey Bee (*in-naħla ta' Malta*).

In addition to the above, numerous endemic, threatened, rare and protected species thrive in garrigue habitats, such as the Maltese Spider Orchid (*il-brimba s-sewda*), the Sicilian Squill (*l-ghansal ikhal*), the Southern Dwarf Iris (*il-bellus*), the Maltese Pyramidal Orchid (*l-orkida piramidali ta' Malta*), and two endemic door-snail species (*id-dussies tal-irdum*; *id-dussies ta' Malta*).



▲ Maltese Honey Bee



◀ Maltese Pyramidal Orchid



▼ White Rockrose