



Scientific Name:

Linaria pseudolaxiflora

English:

Maltese Toadflax

Maltese:

*il-papoċċi ta' Malta,
xatbet l-andar ta' Malta*

The Maltese Toadflax is a small Pelago-Maltese endemic plant, restricted to the Maltese and nearby Pelagian Islands. It occurs in pockets of stony soil on coastal rocky ground, within cliff-top phrygana, maritime garrigue, and old walls and fortifications, amongst others. Indeed, it has also been observed at the edges of cliff tops, in habitats consisting of bare rock and devoid of high vegetation, namely rupestral communities.

Being an annual, the Maltese Toadflax is not only adapted to live in harsh conditions, but whenever these are favourable, it completes its life cycle in a short period of time. It forms few to numerous basal branches up to 20cm high, bearing very small leaves, 5-8mm long, which can be either opposite or in whorls of 3. The flowers have a white and pale violet colouration with a yellow throat and spur, and are produced from March to May. Since this plant has no specialised seed dispersion mechanism, it tends to have a relatively patchy distribution rather than being distributed over a large area. Nonetheless, it is more frequent in Gozo than in Malta.

The Maltese Toadflax is not only very rare and vulnerable to human activity, but its overall distribution and range has declined too, probably due to competition with alien invasive species and indigenous plants which are not as susceptible to habitat modification. Consequently, the Maltese Toadflax is listed in the National Red Data Book, and as a result, this plant is strictly protected through national and international legislation. In addition, Special Areas of Conservation have also been designated to further safeguard this species and its habitat.

