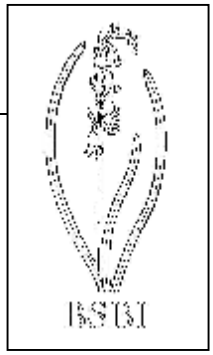
Plant Crib



ONONIS

The very rare annual *O. reclinata* L. can be distinguished from the two large perennial species vegetatively as it has smaller obovate leaflets (ovate to narrowly ovate in *O. repens* and *O. spinosa*). Seedlings of *O. reclinata* have 3-fid leaves (simple in seedlings or youngest leaves of perennial species).

O. repens L.: Plant rhizomatous and usually procumbent; stems rooting above the base, green, sometimes tinged red, ± evenly hairy all round (sometimes sparsely so); terminal leaflet mean length:width ratio 1.6-2.4, apex obtuse to emarginate; flowers pink, wings ± equalling keel; pods shorter than the calyx, which enlarges in fruit. Widespread in grassland and dunes.

O. spinosa L.: Plant not rhizomatous, usually erect or ascending; stems not rooting above the base, dark red with 1 or 2 distinct line of hairs (examine a cross-section); terminal leaflet mean length:width ratio 2.3-3.0, obtuse to acute; flowers brighter pink, wings shorter than keel; pod exceeding calyx. Local, preferring clays and heavy soils, sometimes on weakly saline soils.

The presence or absence of spines is not a diagnostic character for the perennial species and must not be used alone to distinguish *O. repens* and *O. spinosa*. *Ononis repens* is often spiny (var. *horrida* Lange) and *O. spinosa* is sometimes without spines (var. *mitis* Gmel.). Many intermediate populations exist along the Durham coast (Morton 1956), Cambridgeshire (Morriset 1964), and possibly elsewhere and seem to be fertile hybrids, presumably *O. repens* × *O. spinosa*. Note the leaflet length:width ratio differs significantly from Stace's *New Flora*. Leaflet shape varies continuously between populations of each species, but colonies of *O. repens* on the coast have broader leaflets than inland colonies.

References Morriset, P. (1964). *Proc. BSBI* **5**: 378-379.
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Author Updated from M. J. Wigginton & G. G. Graham (1981).

Botanical Society of the British Isles in association with National Museums of Wales
Plant Crib 1998 edited T. C. G. Rich & A. C. Jermy. Produced by H. B. R. Cleal.