

## POLYGONUM AVICULARE AGGREGATE

Characters of the fruit and the persistent perianth are the most reliable differentiating features, hence these are required for herbarium material. There is, however, wide variation even on a single plant. Maritime forms of *P. aviculare* have frequently been erroneously named *P. oxyspermum* (*P. raii* Bab.) (for recent map of latter see *Scarce Plants*). *P. arenastrum* is probably under-recorded, though doubtless widespread and often locally common; look for prostrate plants with densely crowded leaves. *P. rurivagum* is probably decreasing (*Scarce Plants*), but again may be over-looked; look for erect plants with narrow leaves.

- 1 Fruit distinctly shining, smooth, 5.0-6.0 x 3.0-3.5 mm, longer than the persistent perianth (Fig. d); ochreae with 4-6 unbranched veins, shorter than internodes. Coastal on fine shingle or sandy shores

*P. oxyspermum* C. A. Mey. & Bunge ex Ledeb. subsp. *raii* (Bab.) D. A. Webb & Chater

- 1 Fruit dull (or shiny on the margins), striate, enclosed by, or slightly longer than, the persistent perianth (Figs a-c)

- 2 Branch and stem leaves all  $\pm$  equal; persistent perianth divided for half its length (Fig. b); fruit 1.5-2.5 mm, with two sides convex and slightly larger than the one concave face; leaves up to 20 x 5 mm

*P. arenastrum* Boreau

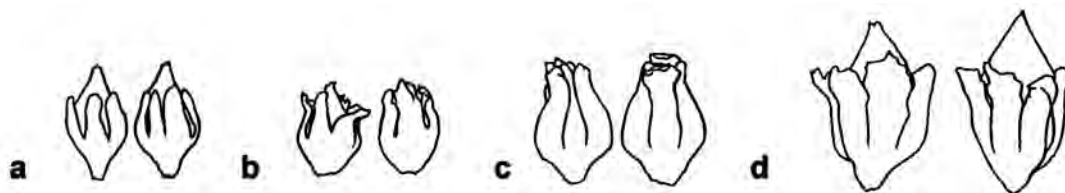
- 2 Branch leaves much smaller than the stem leaves; persistent perianth divided almost to base; fruit trigonous with 3 concave sides

- 3 Stem leaves narrow, linear-lanceolate, 1-4 mm broad; perianth segments narrow; fruit 2.5-3.5 x 1.5-2.0 mm, narrow and exserted (Fig. a). In calcareous arable fields

*P. rurivagum* Jord. ex Boreau

- 3 More upright in habit than *P. arenastrum* (which is prostrate and mat-forming); stem leaves ovate-lanceolate, sub-sessile; leaves 20-50 x 5-15 mm, those of the main stem 2-3 times as long as those on the flowering branches; petioles about 2 mm, included in the ochreae; perianth divided for more than half its length; fruit 2.5-3.5 x 1.5 mm, punctate, dull brown, with 3 equal sides

*P. aviculare* L.



Ripe fruit (a) *P. rurivagum*, (b) *P. arenastrum*, (c) *P. aviculare*, (d) *P. oxyspermum*.

*Reference* Styles, B.T. (1962). *Watsonia* 5: 177-214.