

Hedgehog heaths of the Sierra Nevada

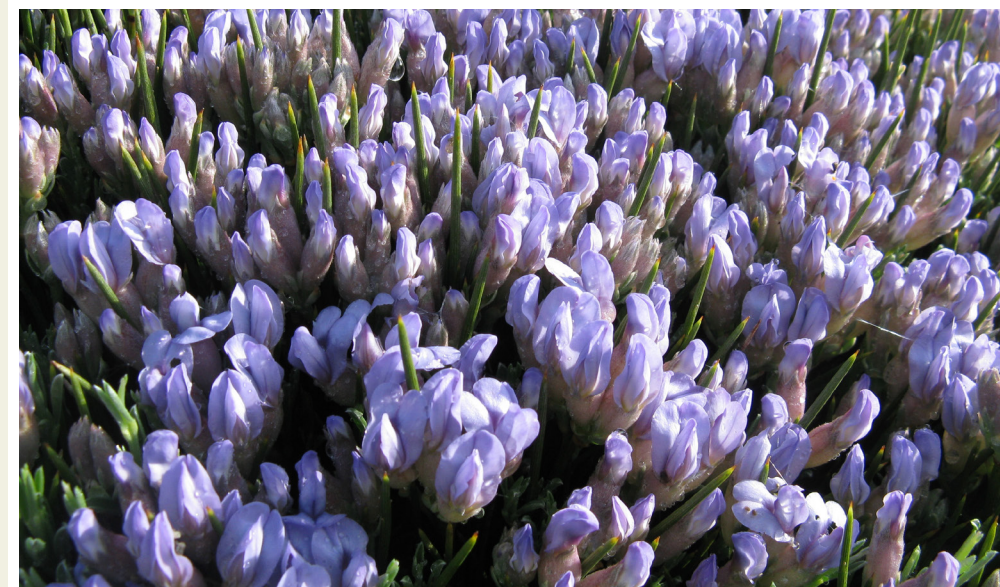


Hedgehog heaths

The Sierra Nevada in southern Spain has several peaks rising over 3000 m above sea level, forming the highest mountain range in southwestern Europe. The forests of the Sierra Nevada have been exploited by humans for centuries, in many places to the extent that they have disappeared. They have been replaced by plant communities better able to withstand the impact of humans and their livestock.

Photos:

- 1** Stony, open slopes and sparsely-wooded forest fragments are home to dwarf shrubs that make up the so-called hedgehog heath, named after their hemispherical, cushion-like growth form. Photo: L. Köhler
- 2** The narrow leaves of the hedgehog plant (*Erinacea anthyllis*) are very inconspicuous, but the small, pointed branches look somewhat like a hedgehog and serve to protect the plant against herbivores. This plant was named and described in 1831 by Professor J. H. F. Link, who also worked in Göttingen. Photo L. Köhler
- 3** The main flowering period of the hedgehog heath community in the Experimental Botanical Garden is the month of June. The brightly coloured flowers and the fragrance, especially of *Vella spinosa*, are highly attractive for insects as well as for human visitors. Photo: L. Köhler



Experimental Botanical Garden

More information

