

The Tersky Coast of the White Sea is inhabited by descendants of Russian settlers, the Pomors, who migrated to the Arctic over nine centuries ago. The harsh climatic conditions of their new land made them dependent on sea resources: fishing salmon and herring, hunting marine animals. Century by century, these people adapted the sea coast for habitation: they established new villages and built small huts for local fishing, which were also used for seasonal or permanent dwelling. Pomors have been perceived as a separate ethnographic group of Russian people during the latest centuries, due to their distinctive culture that was confined to the coasts of the White and Barents seas.

While adapting the sea coast and establishing settlements, the Pomors changed the coastal nature. With their arrival, new plants appeared along the sea shore, which had not been seen in those places. Those plants were introduced by a variety of means. Some, like Greater Plantain (*Plantago major*) and White Clover (*Trifolium repens*), arrived along the roads by sticking to wheels or boots. Others, like Sparse-flowered Forget-me-not (*Myosotis sparsiflora*), Hemp-nettle (*Galeopsis sp.*) and Common Chickweed (*Stellaria media*), were introduced with contaminated seed of cultivated plants and spread to vegetable gardens and fields. Yet others, like Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*) and Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*), appeared with hay bundles which were imported from more southern territories; they germinated from the seed dropped from the fodder. Perennial grasses, like Timothy (*Phleum pratense*) and Meadow Foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), were sown on managed meadows in order to increase the yield and improve the fodder quality; these grasses can survive on abandoned hayfields.

Our knowledge on the history and means of introduction of alien plants in the Russian North in general and the Tersky Coast in particular remain highly incomplete. To investigate the diversity of plants that accompanied the Pomors in their life and economic activities, their present-day distribution and historical connections, a dedicated research has been developed with the financial support from the regional branch of the Russian Geographical Society. As part of this research, a variety of populated places from Umba to Ponoï will be studied. Some of these places have been abandoned for decades and sometimes only the plants, human companions, may indicate their former whereabouts. This leaflet is a brief introduction to the plants of Pomor settlements, presenting short stories of the most remarkable species.



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How the Pomors influenced plant colonisation along the Tersky Coast of the White Sea



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**Imperforate
St John's-wort
(*Hypericum
maculatum*)**

This species is highly familiar to almost every person in Central Russia as a medicinal plant, whereas its occurrence in the Russian North is far less common and prominent. In Murmansk Region, it was discovered on hayfields near Umba Village already in the mid-19th century. Having originally arrived with imported hay, Imperforate St John's-wort can still be seen on meadows around old Pomor villages and fishermen's huts.

**White Goosefoot
(*Chenopodium album*)**

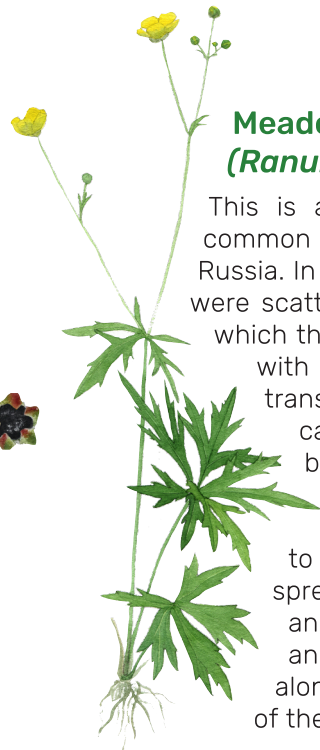


This plant has been common along the Tersky Coast for a long time. Nowadays we are used to consider White Goosefoot as an annoying and noxious weed; however, in ancient times it was an important leaf vegetable, whose soft green parts are edible fresh, or boiled in soups, or mixed with bread. Although it had long since gone into general disuse due to the availability of other quality supplies, its sporadic use as famine food or by the poor is still remembered. Besides the green parts, the seed of White Goosefoot can be used in place of the cereals, although this kind of food was unknown in our territory.



**Cow Parsley
(*Anthriscus sylvestris*)**

In the mid-19th century, this plant was known in the Kola Peninsula from a few places only. It had arrived with new immigrants due to the ability to stick its needle-like fruits into their dresses or the fur of their home animals. Since then, it has been spreading from one village to another, colonising meadows and other open areas in and around the villages. To date, Cow Parsley can be found along the whole of the Tersky Coast. The species prominently manifests itself through its tall thickets with abundant white umbels of tiny flowers, thus marking the abandoned populated places even when the houses are no longer traceable.



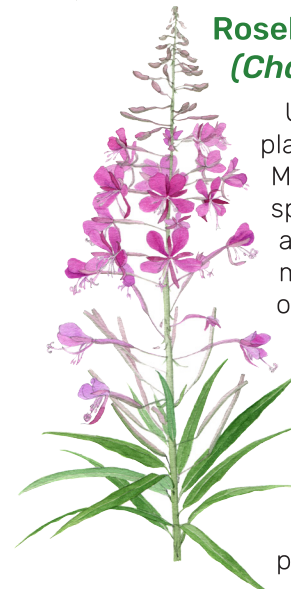
**Meadow Buttercup
(*Ranunculus acris*)**

This is a widespread and most common meadow forb of European Russia. In the 19th century, its first records were scattered along the Tersky Coast, to which the plant could have arrived either with imported hay or as accidentally transported within horse-drawn carriages. Its seeds have a hooked beak that sticks to the fur of animals and facilitates their long-distance dispersal. Due to this adaptation the species has spread to many populated places and currently occurs on hayfields and abandoned meadows, along the roads and pathways of the Tersky Coast.



**Prescott's Chervil
(*Chaerophyllum prescottii*)**

In the 19th century, this plant was sparsely present in villages along the Kandalaksha Gulf; nowadays it became exceptionally rare and is nearly extinct. A few centuries ago Prescott's Chervil was a common weed of barley fields, which were cultivated in this area in the past. This species was imported with contaminated barley grain from southern regions through the Arkhangelsk port. By these means it was dispersed from one village to another in Murmansk Region and Karelia, and reached as far eastwards as northern Finland. Prescott's Chervil prominently differs from the other umbelliferous plants of the Tersky Coast by its bulbous roots.



**Rosebay Willowherb
(*Chamaenerion angustifolium*)**

Unlike the other aforementioned plants, this species is native to Murmansk Region. It can be sporadically found in forests, tundra, along riversides and on seashore meadows, but abundantly grows only in disturbed places: on burned or clear-cut areas, abandoned fields, around villages. Due to its requirement for open ground to germinate and develop, Rosebay Willowherb denotes the places of abandoned villages and fishermen's huts; however, this plant tends to disappear with years when replaced by the natural vegetation.

