

CROCUS GROUP BULLETIN NO. 10

Hon Secretary's Notes

The Crocus Group now has about 60 members and though it has no need of subscriptions from its members, being up to now adequately supported by the generosity of those who bring and buy at the annual Auctions, it has occurred to me that not all those who expressed interest in Autumn 1974 and eventually paid their 25p, may still wish to receive the Bulletins. As it takes a considerable time (better spent in weeding) to address post etc. all those envelopes, I propose to start a new list and will only send future bulletins to those who tell me, verbally or in writing, that they wish to receive them.

Brian Mathew's book 'The Crocus' will shortly be published - see enclosed brochure giving details of a reduced price for Crocus Group members.

Primrose Warburg,
South Hayes,
Yarnells Hill,
OXFORD OX2 9BG

PROGRAMME 1982/83

Tuesday 23rd November 1982 6 p.m. R.H.S. New Hall

Crocus Lecture by Brian Mathew, followed by an auction of crocus corms. Please come and support our funds by bringing and buying. Better value for money than paying a subscription!

Saturday 16th October 1982

Meet at the Main Gate, Wisley at 10.45 a.m. The Director, Chris Brickell, has kindly agreed to show us round his own crocus collection. Afterwards there are sure to be interesting crocuses to see in the Alpine House in the RHS Gardens.

Saturday 19th February 1983

You are invited to visit the garden of your Hon. Sec. near Oxford. Telephone Oxford 47883 for instructions about how to find it - address above. Come at 11 a.m., for coffee. Bring sandwiches and I will provide some hot soup. After lunch I will lead the way to the Oxford Botanic Garden which has a new Alpine House. Brian Mathew hopes to be able to come. Do bring any crocuses of interest to show the rest of us and also any you want named. Gumboots probably essential - my crocuses are NOT grown in a warm dry greenhouse.

Primrose Warburg

Problems in European Crocus

Lecture given by Brian Mathew. Spring 1982.

The lecture began with the spring-flowering annulate species, of which the best known are C. biflorus and C. chrysanthus; all species have 3-lobed stigmas. C. biflorus has now been split into a number of subspecies.

1. C. pestalozzae-only found wild around Istanbul and only white forms have recently been found there. Mr Bowles was sent a blue form which is still in cultivation - where did it come from? This crocus can be distinguished by its sheathing leaves, which are bright green as they come through the ground, and the black speck at the base of each filament.
2. C. danfordiae-found round Ankara and in S. Turkey. Very small flowers, white, yellow or blue with greyish speckling on outside of perianth segments
3. C. cyprius-Endemic to Cyprus, Troodos mountains. Deep yellow centre to flower, large silvery bracts.
4. C. hartmannianus. Dark anthers, also confined to Cyprus. ^{Tunic} Has parallel fibres.
(C. cyprius has horizontal rings in its corm tunic)
5. C. biliottii. Mountains of NE Turkey. Rich blue with strong veining on outside. Must now be known as C. aeriis as it was first so described by Herbert.
6. C. leichtlinii - SE Turkey. Hard tunic like C. laevigatus. Bowles said it was greenish - more commonly lilac-blue in the wild.

Crocuses tend to follow rainfall pattern maps and their distribution makes more sense if this is kept in mind.

Crocus chrysanthus is the overall name given to the yellow-flowered spring annulates. These vary considerably in shape of flower, colour of anthers, and whether striped or plain externally. On present information they cannot satisfactorily be split into subspecies. However, C. almezensis from E. Iran is probably distinct

and is several thousand km. away from the main centre of distribution. It has very strongly channelled broad leaves and is striped or bronzed externally.

Crocus biflorus can be divided into groups by whether or not extra ribs are present in the grooves on the underside of the leaves - the forms from Istanbul, Italy and Rhodes are white with external stripes and no extra ribs. The old horticultural forms such as Scotch Crocus, Argenteus etc. are of this type.

In the Peloponnese in S. Greece the white autumn-flowering form is C. biflorus subsp. melantherus and not C. crewei.

True ssp. crewei is spring-flowering, comes from W. Turkey has black anthers, short broad leaves and only 2 or 3 leaves per corm.

A third form with black anthers is ssp. nubigena found at low altitudes in W. Turkey on lava rocks, with 5 or 6 narrow grey leaves, a scent of clove carnations, and is spring flowering.

Ssp. weldenii from W. Yugoslavia, the Adriatic and Albania has plain white flowers with no yellow in the throat, and ssp. alexandri from around Skopje in S. Yugoslavia is similar but has strong purple colouring on outside petals. The cultivar "Eyecatcher" is very like the wild alexandri whereas "Lady Killer", which has a yellow throat, is a hybrid.

Ssp. adamii is a ^{striped} blue ^{or white} form, found in Yugoslavia, east to the Black Sea and Crimea into the Caucasus.

Ssp. isauricus from S. Turkey has a greyish connective in the middle of the anthers and is cytologically distinct. It can be white or lilac and is usually striped.

Ssp. pulchricolor from N-W Turkey grows in an ecologically distinct damp-meadow habitat and is deep blue, often with paler inner petals.

Ssp. tauri from S. Turkey, extending into Armenia has broader leaves than pulchricolor and is genetically distinct.

Crocus cultivars sold as chrysanthus are often hybrids with biflorus. 'Blue Pearl' is pure biflorus; Cream Beauty is a hybrid. Anyone who makes controlled

crosses is asked to publish the parentage, which is of interest to others working on the genus.

Other crocuses discussed in the talk included C. gargaricus, a stoloniferous species better grown in a garden rather than in a pot. It is known from 3 mountains in Turkey; only on one of these mountains does it produce stolons. More research obviously needed.

Crocus cancellatus can be divided into ssp. mazziaricus from Greece, Jugoslavia and S.W. Turkey with large flowers, white or lilac.

ssp. lycius W. Turkey white flowers & *much-dissected style*.

ssp. pamphylicus with white stamens (the rest have yellow ones) from high rainfall areas of S,W. Turkey.

ssp. damacenus from dryer C. Turkey, with a very coarsely netted tunic. This is the edible variety but Brian said it was mealy and not very nice.

ssp. cancellatus. This is the "cancellatus cilicicus" of gardens and comes from a small area of the Taurus mountains.

Saffron Group (C. sativus et al.) Crocus pallasii can be split into ssp. pallasii, widely distributed from the Balkans via Turkey to Israel. This includes C. olbanus and C. elwesii.

ssp. turcicus from dry areas in E. Turkey, has pointed petals.

ssp. haussnechtii - large club-shaped stigmas, from W. Iran and S. Jordan.

ssp. dispathaceus - very narrow petals; dark wine-purple colour.

Crocus Kotschyanus - often called "Crocus zonatus" in gardens, is confined to Turkey and the form leucopharynx with no yellow in the throat is probably merely a mutation which occurred in the wild.

ssp. cappadocicus from C. Turkey, with a hairless throat, has a corm which grows on its side.

ssp. suworowianus from dryer areas also grows on edge. *It* is not closely related to C. vallicola in spite of what Maw thought.

ssp. kakkariensis has petals with broad wedge-shaped shoulders which taper to their bases (like a bricklayers trowel).

Crocuses pose various interesting problems, for example:-

If C. tournefortii stays open all night what pollinates it, possibly a night-flying moth? It smells of clove carnations in Crete, The Cyclades forms are unscented. Why?

C. cartwrightianus which also stays open has a similar distribution to

C. tournefortii - is this related to some particular pollinator in this region.

C. banaticus is the only Crocus whose anthers split open inwards. What pollinates it in the wild and is there some connection?