

CROCUS GROUP NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1998

Patron	Brian Mathew	Members	157
Committee	Ray Cobb	UK	123
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Editor	David Stephens		
Secretary	Ann Borrill		

Editors Note

Its been a very patchy spring so far in south east England. A very early flowering season combining cold spells alternated by warm spells has not lead to the even flowering we all desire. I promised Bob & Ranveig Wallis that I would put on a show of Crocus at the non competitive AGS show at Caerleon last weekend. Right to the very last moment I was convinced I would have nothing worthwhile to take along as most of the early spring taxa had finished and the later ones were not yet showing. Just managed to put together enough stragglers so as not to completely disgrace myself. Hope you have all been busy pollinating your plants to provide seed for the exchange. Look forward to seeing you in a few weeks time at the spring visits. **DBS**

Seed Exchange

Every year we seem to get members who are confused by the rules of the seed exchange. So, to make sure that there is no confusion they are repeated here. The aim of the seed exchange is to get seed to members as close as possible to the correct time for them to be sown for optimal germination(in the northern hemisphere) The best time for sowing is at the same time as nature does it in the wild, that is when the ripe seed is expelled from the mature seedpod. For this reason we ask donors to send seed as soon as possible after they have collected it, and in any case before 31st July. On the 1st of August a seedlist is compiled and sent to members who have requested a copy by sending me a SAE, again before the 31st July. Overseas members should not stamp the envelope, but an International Reply coupon would be appreciated. Members should indicate on the seedlist which seeds they want (there is no limit) and your seed request should be returned before the 31st August. On 1st September the seeds are divided between the members who requested them, **with donors getting first choice**. You will receive them within a few days and they should be sown immediately. **Donations of seed and requests for seedlists from non donors should be sent, before 31.7.98 to David B Stephens, 'Sherwood', Bunce Common Road, Leigh, Surrey, RH2 8NS, UK.**

Spring Garden Visits

Sunday 22nd February 1998 - we have been invited to the gardens of Rod and Jane Leeds and Chris Grey-Wilson. Arrive at 1100 at Rod and Jane's at '**Chestnuts**', **Whelp Street, Preston St Mary, Sudbury, Suffolk** - tel 01787 247627 for directions. Bring and eat your packed lunch there and then we will go on to Chris Grey-Wilson's at '**The Black House**', **Fenstead End, nr Hawkdedon, Bury St Edmunds** to arrive around 1400. See you there, they are both great gardens.

Growing crocuses in the open garden

One of the most commonly asked questions about crocuses is which species will grow in the open garden without protection. It is not an easy question since the answer depends on many factors such as the location of the garden, its height above sea-level and hence its climate. Soil type, available habitats such as raised beds or rock gardens, tree-shelter etc. all affect the outcome. Nevertheless it would be interesting to learn from members which species grow in their conditions without artificial protection, i.e. without glass or plastic covers at any time. Perhaps one should claim success only for species which have survived and flowered for say five years.

My own list is somewhat small since much of the garden here is "contaminated" with self-sown *Crocus tommasinianus* and *speciosus* so that most of my crocuses have to be grown in pots.

Autumn-flowering

speciosus ssp. *speciosus* (various forms), *pulchellus* (various forms) *serotinus* ssp. *salzmannii*, *nudiflorus*, *kotschyanus* ssp. *kotschyanus*, *banaticus*, *medius*, *goulimyi*, *robertianus*, *laevigatus* (various forms).

Spring-flowering

tommasinianus, *vernus* ssp. *vernus*, *sieberi* ssp. *atticus* *dalmaticus*, *etruscus* 'Zwanenberg', *veluchensis*, *flavus* ssp. *flavus*, *gargaricus* ssp. *herbertii*, 'Cambridge', *biflorus* ssp. *biflorus*, X *jessoppiae*.

The following species, not currently being grown in the open garden, have been successful in the past.

scharojanii, *longiflorus*, *caspius*, *hadriaticus*, *cartwrightianus*, *imperati* ssp. *imperati*, *vernus* ssp. *siculus*, X *stellaris*.

The garden is in Eastern England in the rain-shadow of the Pennines at a height of 55 m. above sea-level. The average rainfall is about 65 cm. (25 inches). Hardiness zone 8 (average minimum temperature - -12.2 to -6.7 C).

So please let us hear about your successes and even failures especially if the cause of failure is known e.g. pests such as slugs, mice, squirrels, kangaroos etc.