Crocus Group Bulletin No. 40 : Summer 2011

Patron	**Brian Mathew MBE VMH**	**Members**	**186**
Committee	**David Stephens**	**Home**	**112**
	Alan Edwards	**Overseas**	**74**
Hon. Sec.	**Tony Goode**		

Hon Sec Notes

It has been the most difficult season for growing crocus in the UK that I have experienced. We suffered the most severe cold spell for decades and it came very early in the winter, lasting from late November until the early weeks of 2011. In my own collection the most noticeable damage occurred in potted plants grown in a raised bench in a cold greenhouse. Without the protection of soil warming cables the frost killed off the roots in a number of pots leading to the demise of the bulbs. The damage only became evident after the thaw, as some plants grew while others .... did not! In cold frames outside, where pots sit on the ground there were no losses. It would be interesting to hear of the experiences of other growers. Spring in the south of the UK came early and was very dry, little or no rain between February and the end of May. Very high temperatures in April brought about an early dormancy. All the above factors seem to have combined to leave us with a very poor seed harvest. So if you have any spare seed, even small quantities, please do send it to David for the seed exchange.

I am grateful to the few people who have contributed material for this newsletter. Please consider making a contribution. It is always interesting to hear of other growers experiences or of peoples travels to see crocus in the wild. You can email them to me or post to: Tony Goode, 3 Woodland Road, Hellesdon, Norwich. NR6 5RA. UK

Crocus Group Seed Exchange

The aim of the seed exchange is to get *Crocus* seed to members as close as possible to the correct time for them to be sown for optimal germination. *Crocus* seed has been shown to germinate best if sown during the higher temperatures of late summer before the lower temperatures of autumn and winter initiate germination. The best time for sowing is therefore at the same time as nature does it in the wild, that is when the ripe seed is expelled from the mature seedpod in late spring to early summer. For this reason we ask donors to send seed as soon as possible after they have collected it, and in any case before 31st of July.

During the first week of August a seed list is compiled and sent to members by e-mail or surface mail, who have requested a copy by sending an e-mail request or a stamped addressed envelope, again before the 31st of July.

Members should indicate on the seed list request form which seeds they want up to a limit of 30 packets, and the form should be returned by e-mail or surface mail before the 31st of August. About the 1st week of September the seeds are divided between the members who request them, **with donors getting first choice,** although non donors always get a good deal. You will receive your seeds within a few weeks after that. They should be sown immediately and left exposed to the weather until they germinate, after which they may be brought under cover.

Donations of seed and requests for seed list should be sent, before 31st July to: -
David Stephens, 76 South Terrace, Dorking, Surrey. RH4 2AQ, UK. or for an e-mailed seed list to:
thecrocusgroup@hotmail.com

To recap:

Rule 1. If you are a donor, send seed before 31st July

Rule 2. If you are not a donor but want a seed list, send an e-mail or SAE before 31st July

Obviously, donors always get first choice and very rare seed in short supply invariably goes to them. However, non-donors receive a fair proportion of what they ask for and always get a good deal.

Some statistics last five years:

Year	No. of *Crocus* group members	No. of members requesting seed list	No. of members donating seed	No. of seed lots offered	No. of *Crocus* taxa represented
2010	**177**	**68 (38%)**	**23 (13%)**	**137**	**76**
2009	**184**	**70 (38%)**	**29 (16%)**	**138**	**79**
2008	**184**	**61 (33%)**	**28 (15%)**	**110**	**65**
2007	**166**	**61 (37%)**	**27 (16%)**	**148**	**74**
2006	**153**	**64 (42%)**	**26 (17%)**	**159**	**73**

The *Crocus* Group seed exchange has been very successful and instrumental in getting most of the known *Crocus* taxa into cultivation. When I managed to persuade Primrose Warburg to allow the first seed exchange in 1992, it was very difficult to get hold of many *Crocus* taxa, even some of those we would consider fairly common by today's standards.

One of my frustrations as curator of the exchange over the years has been that for the rarer taxa there are never enough seeds to make more than just a few packets. Obviously, most members request these so most will not receive them. These are distributed by a blind draw among the donors. Very occasionally there are enough rare seeds to allow everyone to have a packet such as with *Crocus michelsonii* in 2007. However, even with such small numbers of seed available these rare taxa are becoming slowly more widely grown. These last few years has seen the distribution of small quantities of *Crocus wattiorum* so in a few years time hopefully this will be more widely grown.

Can I urge members to make an effort to try to get seeds from their plants and to swap them in the seed exchange; this is one of the major ways to increase their availability and your collection. It can be difficult to get *Crocus* seed set in bad growing seasons particularly on the spring taxa. But, if while you are examining your flowering pots you carry a paint brush or similar implement, you can assist nature by becoming a pollinator.

Growing bulbous plants from seed does not seem to occur to a lot of otherwise good growers. Perhaps it is the fact that you have to wait a few years before you see a flower that deters. However, other than this, the process is extremely easy, just sow *Crocus* seed halfway down a pot of seed compost during late summer, expose to all weathers until germination then put under some protection from excess cold and water logging. Keep on the dry side over the late spring and summer then repeat the process. A few years doing this and you will have the pleasure each year of seeing new flowering pots of *Crocus* of your own making. **S**

Correspondence from Herbert Reisinger in Austria

Crocus neapolitanus, as we are used to call this plant, is locally common around Gresten. It is also found around the river Erlauf to the west and scattered up to Mariazell to the East. It usually grows on extensive meadows, which are gazed by cows or on small strips between intensive meadows and rivers. If you start bringing out liquid manure, the Crocus dwindles in a few seasons.

I do not know, what is the English phrase, but the things farmers collect from their animals and bring out in spring and autumn as a semi-liquid fertilizer. Crocuses and most other plants dislike this, or at least cannot stand the competition with other plants any longer and if it is done very often and heavily, you can find meadows with less than 15 species of plants. We call the process inensifying the meadow, which means up to five cuttings a year but these meadows are uninteresting from a botanical point of few

Crocus albiflorus is common in the Austrian Alps, from the bottom of the valleys up to around 2000msm. There is most often a mixture of white and blue colours, white in my opinion dominating. C. albiflorus is a much smaller plant than neapolitanus.
South of the Alps, in Styria, Crocus heuffelianus is found in Austria. It is easy to identify by its sepal markings.
There is still a dispute, wheather Cr. neapolitanus is indigenous to the prealps of Lower Austria or was it intoduced by the Romans.
I think, that the taxonomy of the Crocus vernus group is still not satisfying solved.







Janis Ruksans – Crocus in a Latvian Nursery.

Janis writes of this new form of Crocus speciousus which originated from Iran under WHIR collection numbers.

C. speciosus archibaldii has - 1/ deep yellow throat
2) stigma less branched and ends below or at tip of anthers
3) Leaves start to develop just after end of blooming
4) different pattern of flower design (less important, but prominent)

Crocus speciosus archibaldii

C speciosus Blue Web

C speciosus and C pulchellus

There follows a selection of the many interesting crocus that Janis has shown on the SRGC Forum during the 2010/2011 growing season.

Crocus laevigatus – Mt Vouvala, Crete

Crocus laevigatus – Spring flowering forms

Crocus hadriaticus hybrids

Crocus hadriaticus x ‘Purple Heart’

Crocus pallasii ‘Homeri’

C pallasii RUDA 035

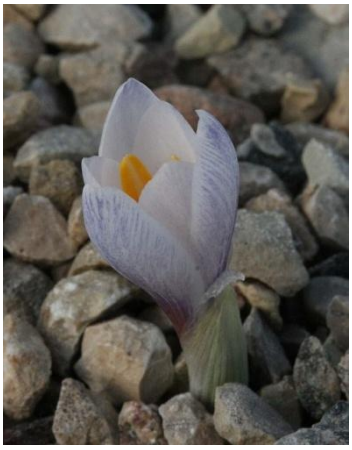
C. Mathewii ‘Brian Mathew’

Crocus abantensis ‘Azcabans Escape’

Crocus biflorus LST 251 – 01

Crocus atrospermus JATU 030-11

C atrospermus 044-08

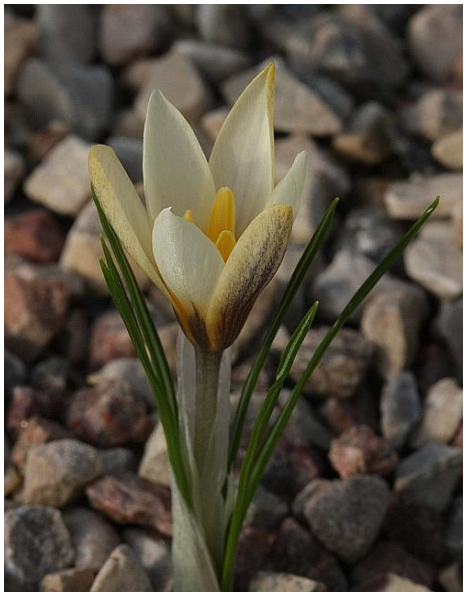


C adamii WHIR 063-03

Crocus biflorus fibroannulatus

Crocus biflorus ionopharynx

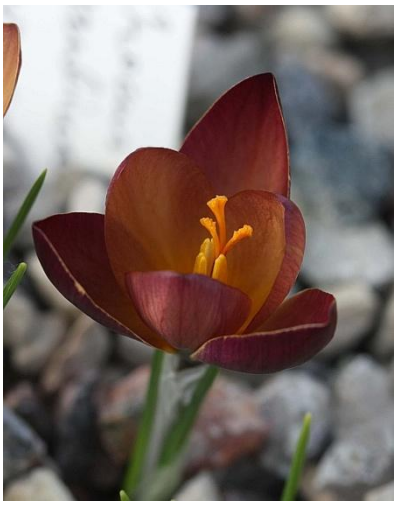
Crocus munzurense HKEP 9911 - 07



Crocus sarichinarensis alba Crocus sarichinarensis R2CV – 035 – 01

This taxon is newly described and close to C flavus.

Crocus korolkowii – ‘Apricot’ - ‘Dytiscus’ - ‘Snow Leopard’



Crocus sp nova TULA 001 -16 - TULA 001 – 21 Crocus x paulinae (Janis own cross)

Crocus chrysanthus x isauricus

Growing crocus in Latvia

Latvian Spring 2011

Oron Peri in Israel posted some pictures of an interesting Coastal form of Crocus aleppicus ... or a sp nova?

Crocus aleppicus Coastal fm

- Golan Heights form

Rafa Dominguez showed pictures of Crocus carpetanus in Spain




As always there are many other crocus featured in the SRGC forum and Ian Young's Bulb Log – Take a look for yourself!

Growing Crocus in Cat Litter – Robert Skipper. Surrey, UK.

I have never been a particularly competent crocus grower by I have tried to maintain a small selection of plants in pots over several years. When I started growing crocuses I used a more or less traditional compost mix in terracotta pots plunged into an improvised sand bed. At first things were straight forward enough with most species proving reliable and increased slowly for year to year with just the odd setback. However space considerations lead me to change to square plastic pots and despite several changes to the compost mix success in plastic has been less certain with the lost several species and others showing sharp declines in recent years. I am sure crocus can do fine in plastic pots but I am probably too slapdash about watering resulting in the oscillation from wet to day at the plant roots or possibly too much moisture during the summer rest. I have removed several pots which I suspected of being virus infected but this does not seen to have changed my perception of a slow inexorable decline.
So after a talk at my local AGS group demonstrating success in growing fritillary and crocus seed in clay based cat litter I decided that whatever my problem was it clearly not working and time a change. So last summer I re-potted the bulk of the surviving corms in 100% pure cat litter, but as this did seem a slightly unnatural procedure I first made a count of the number and total weight of the corms in each case. I am writing this in early September and have just re-weighted and re-counted after their first season in this medium. What follows is a simple and unadorned record of the results of my results. I am afraid there is nothing very special about the plants or anything scientifically rigorous about my method, these are simply the raw data from my modest trail which I though others might like to see and perhaps encourage others to present their own data (I am sure the plenty out there).

There is of course one glaring omission from the data, namely comparative data using my normal sandy compost mix. In truth I never though about doing it before and did so now in order to reassure myself that this was not too silly a thing to be doing. The controlled double blind trial I am happy to leave to someone else.
Perhaps I should mention one other advantage of method I did not anticipate, namely the medium remains free and non-clogging so re-potting is a joy, when the contents of pots were poured into a flat tray the corms are very easy to see amongst the clay granules quickly removed in dry and dust-free state.

Lastly, a few words about the data. I have tried to keep the data as simple and unadulterated as possible. It simple lists the total weigh and number of corms recorded at the beginning at end of the season. There are also columns showing the average corm weight for the two years. The last two columns record the percentage change in terms of both weight and number.

Compost – 100% Tesco premium low dust cat litter

Pre-treatment – None

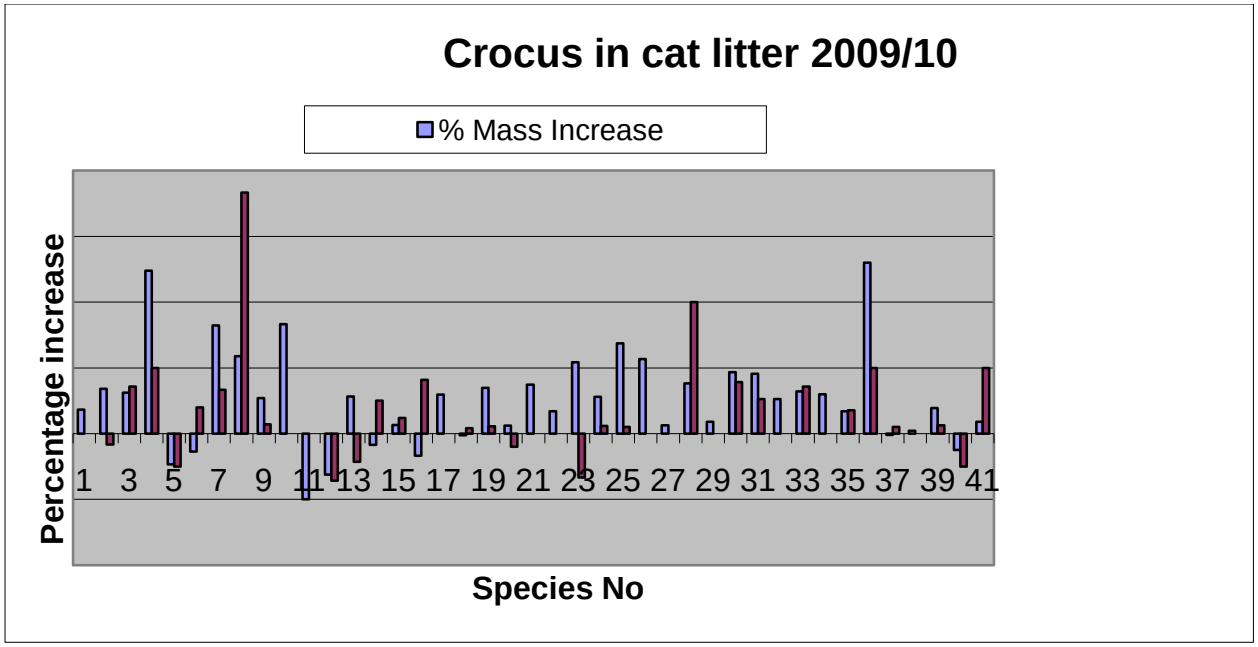
Feed – Half strength Tomorite for all watering

Watering intervals – Whenever the top centimetre changed from orange to dusty pink
Pots – Plastic, tall form
2011 bring

Potting depth – 5cm

I will not attempt to analyse the results except to say that subjectively this does feel like a success with more increasing than decreasing and has you might expect it works better for some than others. One year of results mean little so all these subjects have now been re-potted in exactly the same manner but now a little deeper. Let see what

	Mass(g)	Number	mean wt/corm	Mass(g)	Number	mean wt/corm	Inc Mass	Inc No
Boryi	1.8	2	0.90	2.46	2	1.23	36.7%	0.00%
Cambessidessii	6.1	12	0.51	10.25	10	1.03	68.0%	-16.67%
Goulimyi leucantha	19.1	7	2.73	31	12	2.58	62.3%	71.43%
Hadriaticus	2.2	1	2.20	7.65	2	3.83	247.7%	100.00%
Korolkowii	5.9	10	0.59	3.14	5	0.63	-46.8%	-50.00%
Kotchyanus	34.7	15	2.31	25.15	21	1.20	-27.5%	40.00%
Longifolius	1.9	6	0.32	5.03	10	0.50	164.7%	66.67%
Malyi ROC AH 8651	4.9	3	1.63	10.67	14	0.76	117.8%	366.67%
Minimus Corsica	2.8	7	0.40	4.31	8	0.54	53.9%	14.29%
Pallasii Pallasii	1.1	2	0.55	2.93	2	1.47	166.4%	0.00%
Robertianus	0.6	1	0.60	0	0	0.00	-100.0%	
Serotinus atropurpura	1.4	7	0.20	0.53	2	0.27	-62.1%	-71.43%
Serotinus clusii	3.6	7	0.51	5.63	4	1.41	56.4%	-42.86%
Sieber PJC215	2.8	4	0.70	2.32	6	0.39	-17.1%	50.00%
Sieberi firefly	14.1	21	0.67	15.92	26	0.61	12.9%	23.81%
Chrysanthus	19.1	11	1.74	12.69	20	0.63	-33.6%	81.82%
Dalmaticus	1.2	1	1.20	1.91	1	1.91	59.2%	0.00%
Fleisheri	5.1	12	0.43	4.97	13	0.38	-2.5%	8.33%
Goulimyi bicolour	19.5	9	2.17	33.1	10	3.31	69.7%	11.11%
Imperati	2.1	5	0.42	2.35	4	0.59	11.9%	-20.00%
Korolkowii	1.8	3	0.60	3.14	3	1.05	74.4%	0.00%
Kosannii	1.8	6	0.30	2.41	6	0.40	33.9%	0.00%
Kotschyanius mix	0.7	3	0.23	1.46	1	1.46	108.6%	-66.67%
Laeviagtus CEH 612	5.8	17	0.34	9.04	19	0.48	55.9%	11.76%
Laevigatus LC20	3.5	10	0.35	8.31	11	0.76	137.4%	10.00%
Laevigatus N4/98	2.6	6	0.43	5.55	6	0.93	113.5%	0.00%
leavigatus?	9.3	12	0.78	10.49	12	0.87	12.8%	0.00%
Ligusticus	1.4	3	0.47	2.47	9	0.27	76.4%	200.00%
Malyi	11.1	6	1.85	13.12	6	2.19	18.2%	0.00%
Medius	7.4	14	0.53	14.3	25	0.57	93.2%	78.57%
Minimus AE	6.2	19	0.33	11.84	29	0.41	91.0%	52.63%
Niveus ex seed	4.5	5	0.90	6.86	5	1.37	52.4%	0.00%
Oliveri Balansae	1.9	7	0.27	3.12	12	0.26	64.2%	71.43%
Pulchellus P82119	1.4	5	0.28	2.24	5	0.45	60.0%	0.00%
Serontinus “El Torcal”	23.5	17	1.38	31.47	23	1.37	33.9%	35.29%
Sieberi mix	0.2	1	0.20	0.72	2	0.36	260.0%	100.00%
Specious	9.3	10	0.93	9.1	11	0.83	-2.2%	10.00%
Specious Albus	2.3	4	0.58	2.4	4	0.60	4.3%	0.00%
Specious oxonium	1.8	8	0.23	2.5	9	0.28	38.9%	12.50%
Vallicola	1.8	2	0.90	1.35	1	1.35	-25.0%	-50.00%
Vernus Greacus	7.8	10	0.78	9.19	20	0.46	17.8%	100.00%
						means	50.0%	27.6%



AND FINALLY – A NEW MEMBER!

28 March

I would like to become a member of the crocus group. I've attached a
picture of how my garden looks like right now.
Thanks in advance.
I honestly don't know how long they have been there (probably all my life, since I'm only 32). I bought the house in the summer of 2007 without knowing they were there. So when spring came in 2008 it was a nice surprise to see my lawn turn into a crocus field. The only downside is that all the crocuses doesn't give the grass many chances, so I have almost no grass when the crocuses wither.
Waking up and looking out on all the crocuses truly makes me smile.
Best regards
Henning Berggreen
Denmark