

International Rock Gardener

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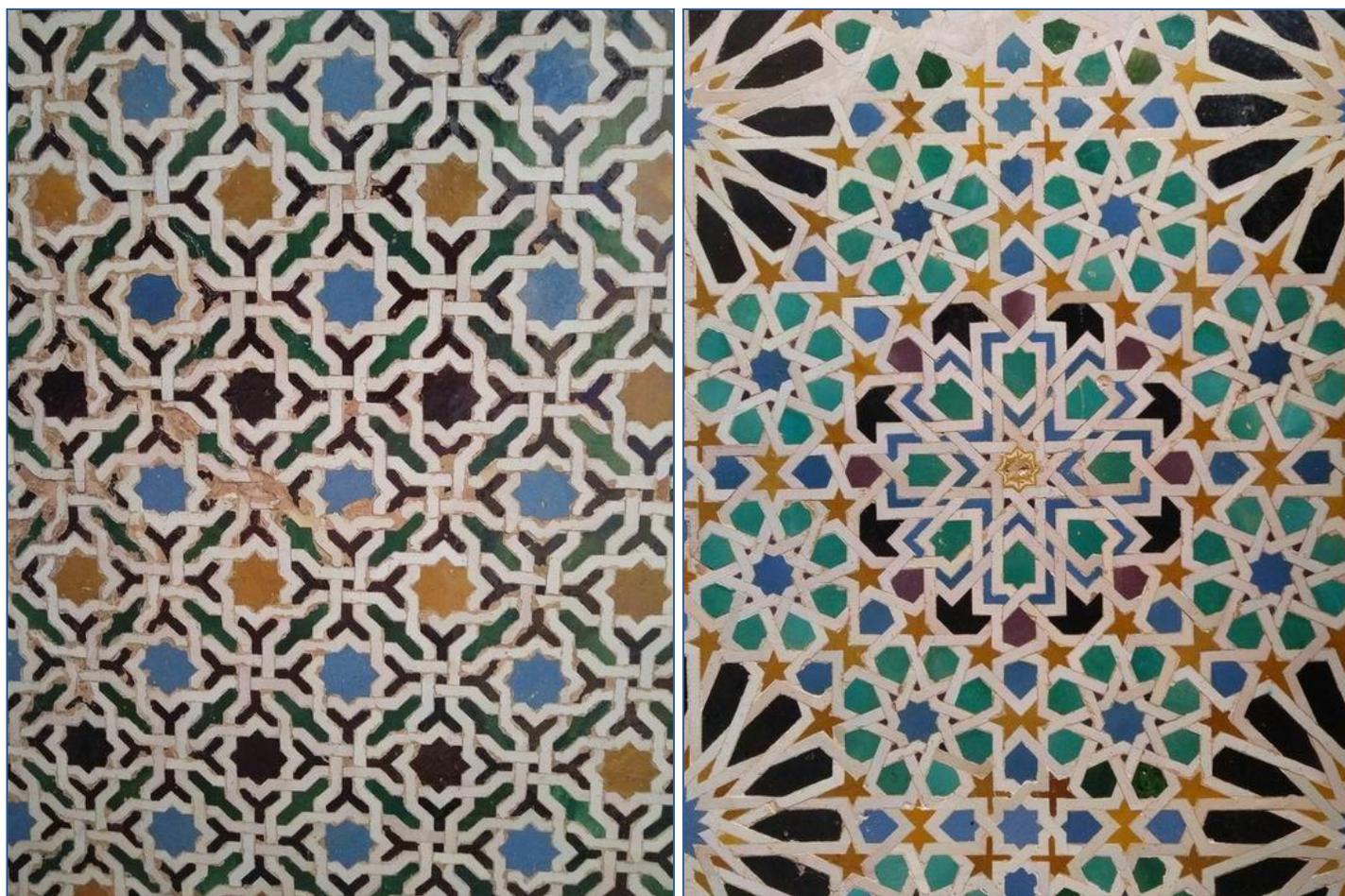


It appears that Spain retains its attraction to draw visitors keen to enjoy a break and see wildflowers at the same time. Răzvan Chișu, a Romanian who now lives and works in Cheshire recalls an early spring trip to Alpujarras. Răzvan recently took over as Editor for the Saxifraga Society and is been much involved in Plant Heritage projects and Hardy Plant Society displays.

The charming garden of Hana Zíková in Bohemia is introduced by Zdenek Zvolanek with photos by Zdena Kosourová. Proof, if any were needed that there are also talented female Czech gardeners; we do hear more from the male of the species! Ian Christie describes a new *Galanthus* cultivar, named for a sadly missed SRGC former President.

Cover photo: Hana Zíková's garden with *Rhodanthemum catananche*, a plant from the Atlas Mts - Photo by Harry Jans.

Alpujarran spring : text and photos by Răzvan Chișu



Are the intricate Moorish azulejos (tiles) inspired by the carpets of flower of the Alpujarran spring?

For a long time Alhambra, the famous Moorish citadel in the city of Granada has been one of the places I most wanted to visit.

Having had enough of cold, wet weather and with my birthday coming up I booked a few days off to visit Alhambra and stay in the Alpujarras, a mountainous region close to the Sierra Nevada mountains of Andalusia.

So, one Saturday morning we flew into Malaga and our first stop was only 15 minutes away from the airport at the [Jardin Botanico-Historico La Concepcion](#).

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As the name suggest this old farm was established as a garden in the 19th century by a noble family and later developed as a botanical garden by Malaga City Council. The atmospheric, tropical style woodland with streams and waterfalls sits well in the dry Mediterranean landscape that features succulent collections but also areas with native plants.



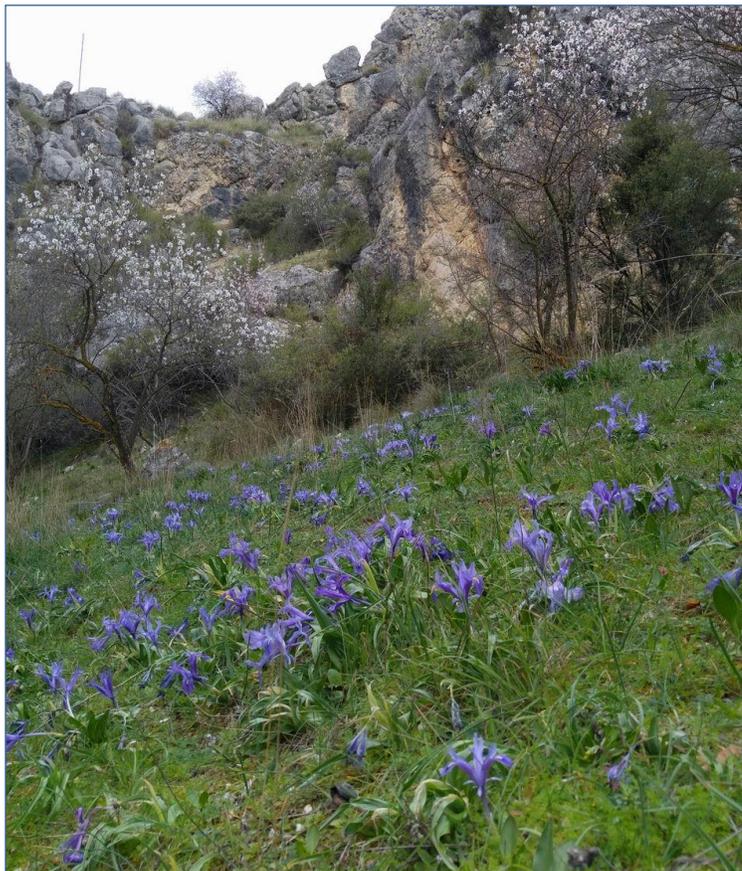
Aristolochia baetica

At the time of our visit in mid-February, I came across *Aristolochia baetica* scrambling through the thicket with hundreds of flowers resembling small brownish furry funnels, blue *Lavandula multifida* and bicoloured *Lathyrus tingitanus*. Along the sunny paths near several of the vantage points on the steep hills a brown version of our bluebell was growing in the hundreds: *Dipcadi serotinum*.

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Dipcadi serotinum

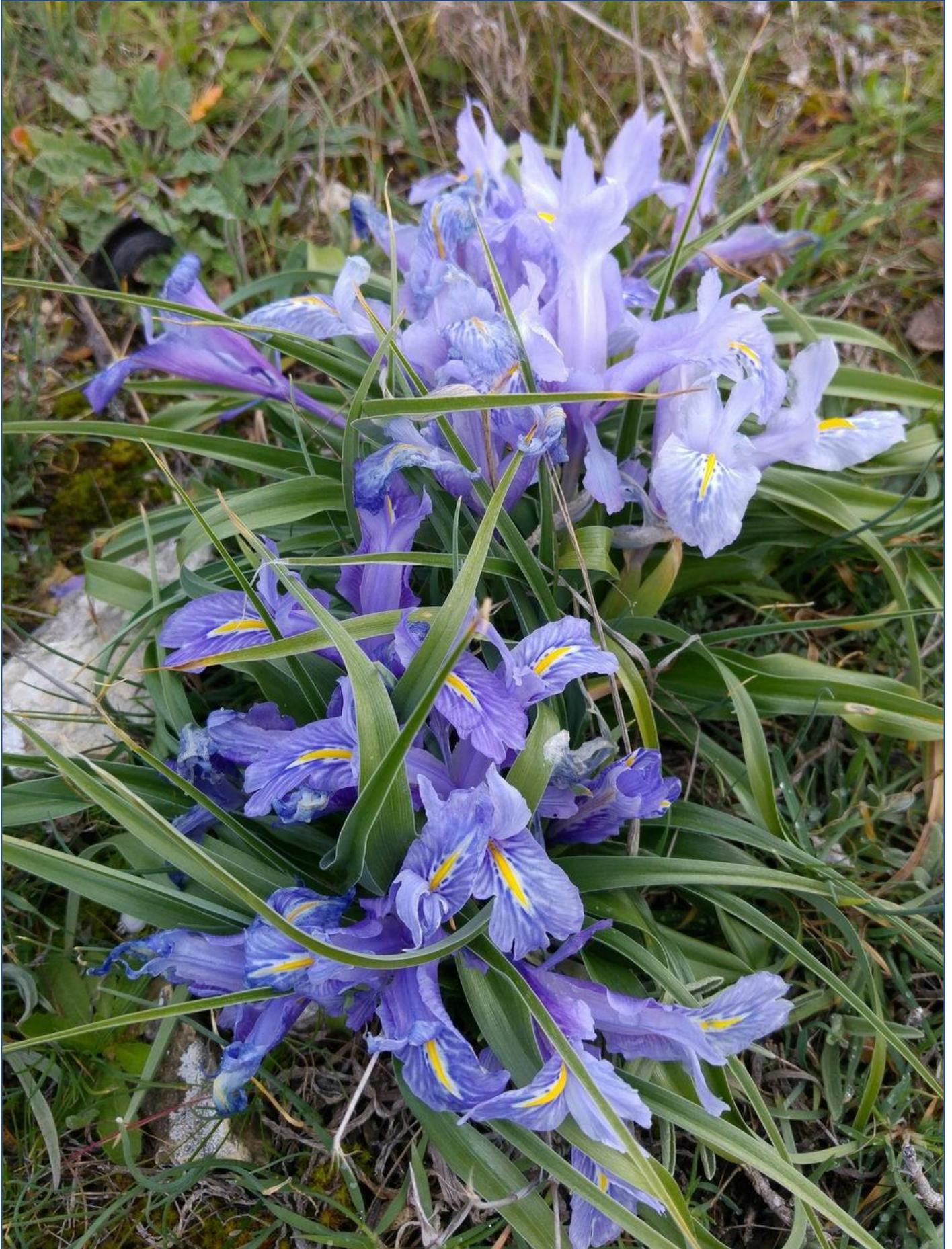


I won't dwell much on the [gardens of Alhambra and the Generalife](#), they've been covered extensively elsewhere. I can just say that, even this early in the year, the visit was completely worth it, especially for one moment in the quiet afternoon, when the mellow light filled with bird-song was infused by the lemony scent of *Lonicera fragrantissima*.

As it might have been just a little bit nippy for a dip in the sea, we chose instead the outdoor hot springs of [Alhama de Granada](#). This is a medieval town, built high up at the top of a gorge not far from the Sierras de Tejada, Almjara y Alhama.

Not only did we enjoy the warm waters but I was glad to find a few plants as well. The gorge, where the hot springs are, is a little out of town and is not very long but with its ragged cliffs it provides perfect shelter for plants that have the rest of their natural environment completely overtaken by agriculture.

Iris planifolia



Iris planifolia

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Iris planifolia

There grew the only European Juno iris: *Iris planifolia* in various shades of blue. It was found in abundance on both sides of the gorge and also in a few old orchards nearby that must have escaped being sprayed. These were carpeted in annuals like *Calendula arvensis*, several *Fumaria* species and a pink *Erodium*.

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Muscari neglectum in Alhama gorge.



On the slopes of the gorge *Muscari neglectum* was found in places but also a nice, wooly biennial with salmony-pink flowers: *Cynoglossum cheirifolium*.

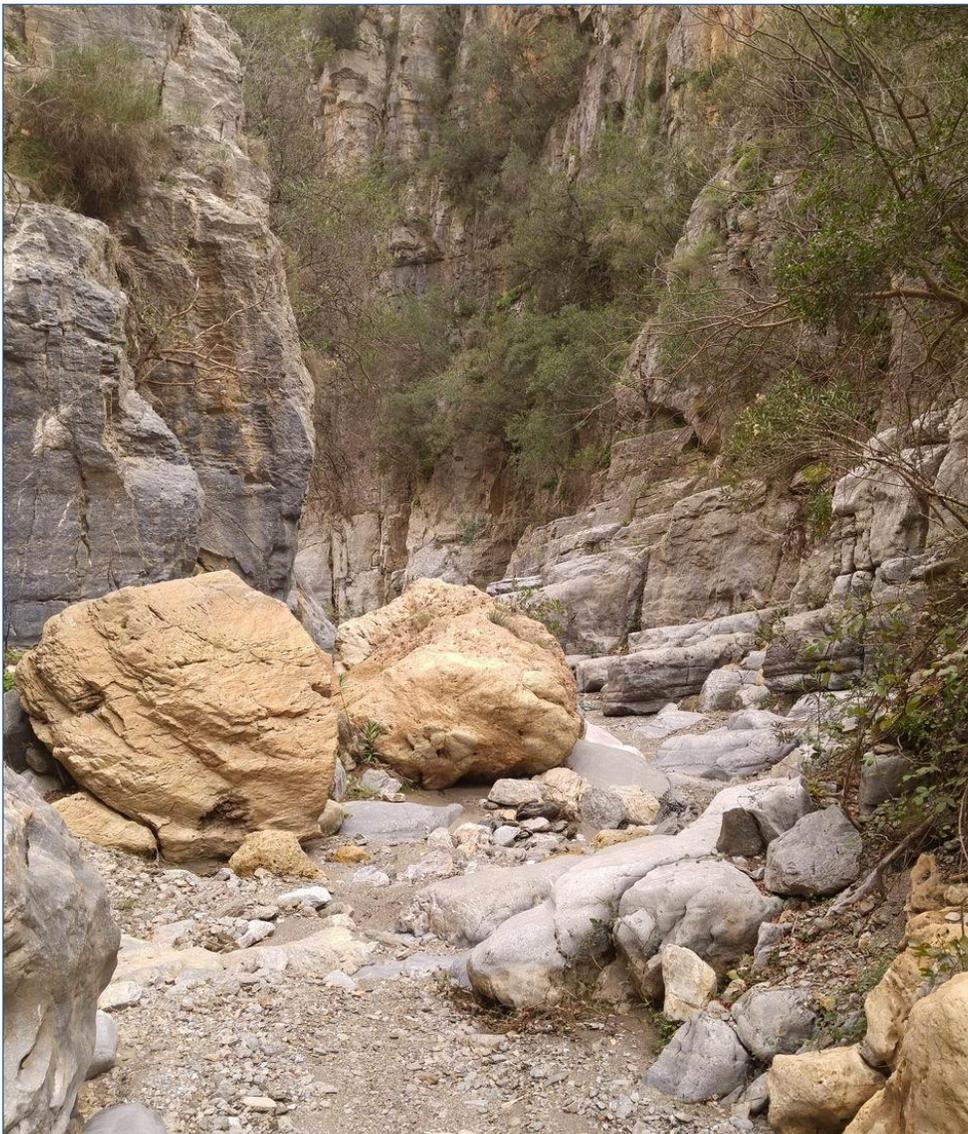
Cynoglossum cheirifolium

The Alpujarra mountain range runs parallel to the Sierra Nevada on its southern, sea-facing side. The name comes from the time of the Moors who ruled Andalusia for more than 700 years before the Spanish Reconquista. The white, flat roofed Alpujarran houses, perched on steep hills, are very similar to mountain dwellings from North Africa.

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Almond groves and villages with Sierra Nevada in the background.



Alfornon river bed

A short walk away from our lodgings in Alfornon, we followed a dry, wide riverbed which revealed a series of gorges nestled among hillsides covered in almond orchards and small vineyards.

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Alforon gorge

Masses of seedlings and young leaves proved that in a month or so these cliffs and rock ledges would be awash with colour. Maybe a bit early for all the annuals but there were still a few treasures to be found. Scrambling up through the thorny shrubs and climbers in order to photograph a few dangling ***Clematis cirrhosa*** flowers took me to a small scree where a healthy ***Ophrys fusca*** colony was thriving.



Left:
*Clematis
cirrhosa*



Right:
Ophrys fusca
in Alforon
gorge

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Before entering the second gorge, gracefully hanging down on 30-40 cm long stems were 2 flowers of a Dianthus – possibly *Dianthus lusitanus*.



Above: *Dianthus lusitanus*

Right: *Arisarum vulgare*



Lavandula multifida

Also in flower everywhere were *Arisarum vulgare*, *Lavandula multifida* and *Asphodelus albus*.

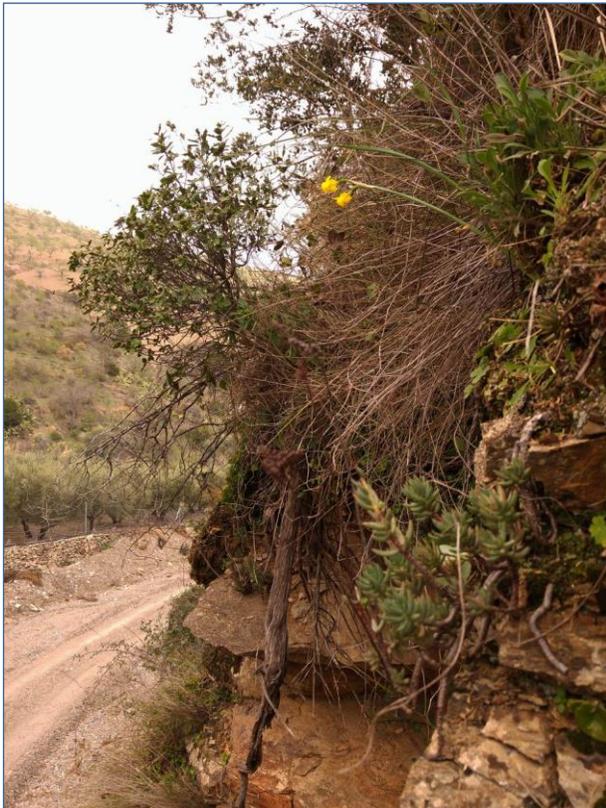
On the shaded sides of the gorge large thickets of *Ruscus aculeatus* were both in flower and fruit. As one can see, the flowers are borne on leathery leaf-like structures, (cladodes) which are actually flattened stems, adapted to cope with the drought and hot weather. The next day a mighty thunderstorm raged for about half an hour and I was glad I wasn't in the narrow gorge which would quickly have filled with water.

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Ruscus aculeatus

Near the village on an almost vertical cliff, covered in rosemary, were a few plants of ***Narcissus gaditanus***. This is a small-flowered species, which is found along the extreme south of the Iberian Peninsula.



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Ophrys fusca near Orgiva

Lavandula stoechas

Another trip we took was to Orgiva (of ['Driving over Lemons'](#) fame and unofficial hippie capital of Andalusia) and the mountain villages beyond.

Apart from the ever present almond blossom in every possible shade from pure white to dark pink, I found a few other interesting plants: *Lavandula stoechas* in flower, honey-scented, cushion-forming *Lobularia maritima*, several species of *Euphorbia*, pink flowered *Antirrhinum barrelieri*, *Polygala rupestris* and ubiquitous *Moricandia arvensis* (the violet cabbage).



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Lobularia maritima



Antirrhinum barrelieri



Moricandia arvensis



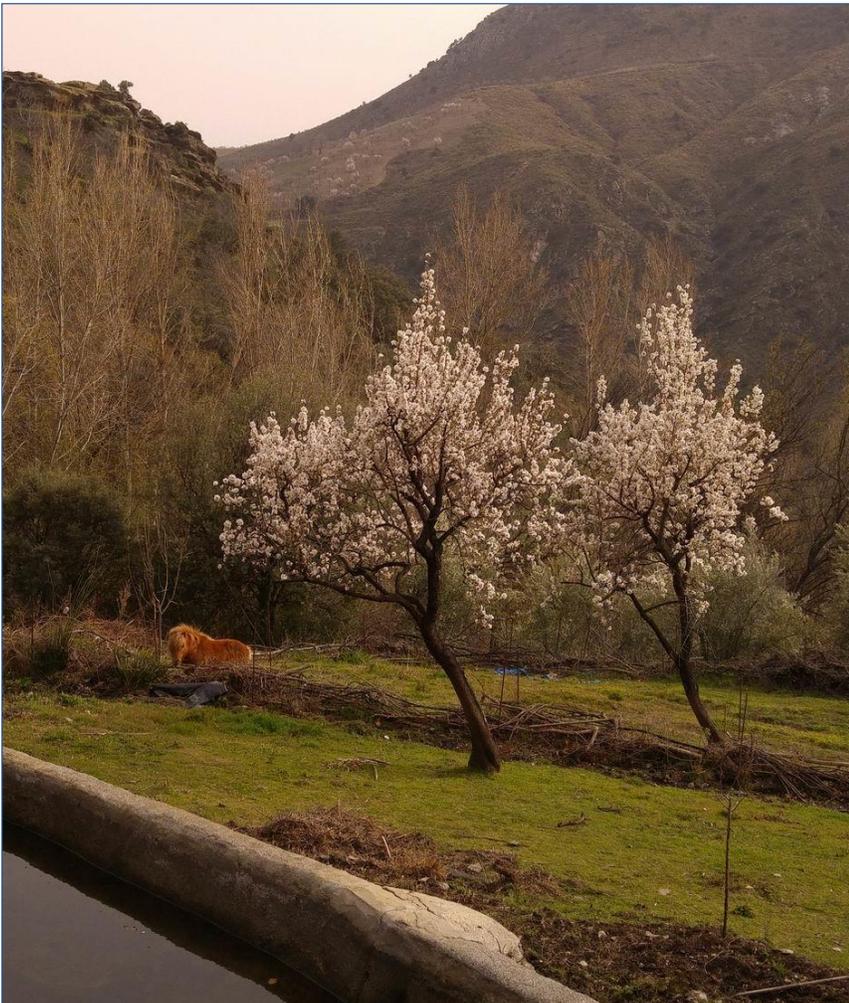
Polygala rupestris

Along one of the old acequias, the Moorish irrigation channels in an ancient orchard, *Helleborus foetidus* was in flower. Also several species of ferns were adorning the stone walls: *Adiantum*, *Cheilanthes* and *Polypodium*.

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Some rock gardens are better planted than others!



Alpajurran spring

Although a bit early in the season for the spring flower bonanza, these 5 days were filled with enough plant treasures, beautiful landscapes and sunny weather to make me want to return soon.

[Răzvan Chișu](#)
BSc, MSc Horticulture
Cheshire, UK

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Great Rock Garden Of Hana Zíková by Zdeněk Zvolánek, Czech Karst

There is nowadays a big difference between the microclimates of a town and a village. Our alpiners are covered with dirty air which stops the ultraviolet and other natural cosmic rays important to plant life. Towns are also too hot in summer time with no snow covering in winter and with odd, low humidity. It is surely a recipe for a shorter life cycle for plants and partly for the gardeners too. My intention is to bring the reader into the clean happy microclimate of one small Southern Bohemian village named Újezdec, where leading Czech plantswoman, Hana Zíková, maintains her large crevice garden.



Hana Zíková in her garden

Crevice gardening principles and advantages were described by the Canadian rock wizard Paul Spriggs in the February issue of the IRG. Here in Újezdec you can see the positive effects of this gardening technique. Mrs. Zíková has her garden in a huge area, like a cool-box, achieved by the old farmhouses framing it on three sides. The base of this cooler is a natural thick layer of good clay. The clay provides a cool influence at the garden substrate/soil above it and offers its store of minerals to the permanently hungry plants.

This rock work made by a woman is unusual, having a craftsman's technique married with elegant design. She was brave and dismantled all smaller sheds, pavement and buildings in her farm yard; these were made from flat metamorphous slabs suitable for the vertical setting of the layers forming her outcrops. The open places in the front of vertical cliffs, which are nicely top dressed with grit, flakes and small stones of the same kind of stone used in the outcrops, are very refreshing and natural. It

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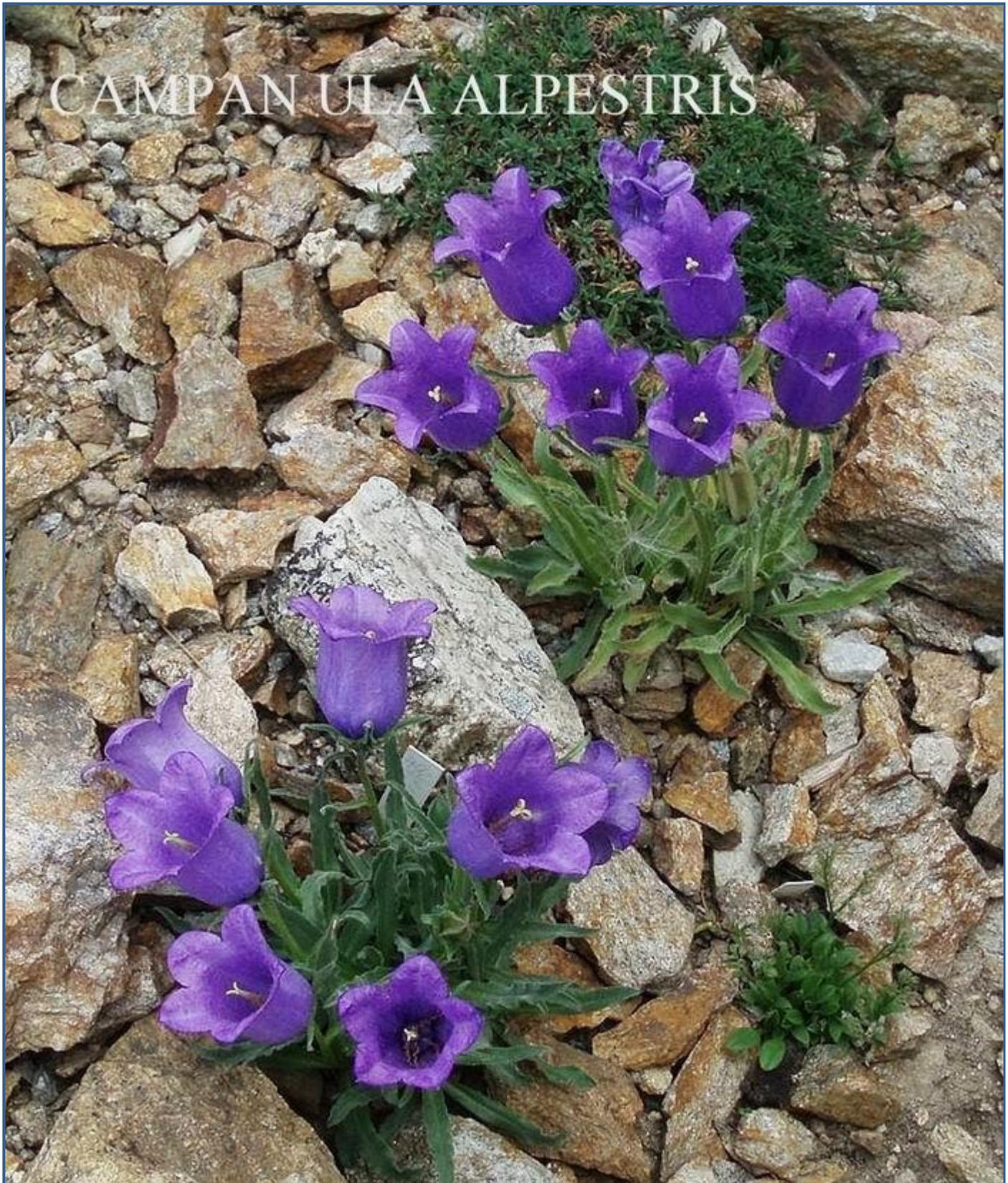
makes at once a picture and also space for access and maintenance to higher crevice beds. I must stress the important fact that all soil in the rock garden is neutral or acid, as the stones are too. There is alkaline soil only in some nice big stone farm troughs.

One genus beloved by the owner are dwarf Campanulas. The competition of other lovers, such as slugs, is not so strong inside the garden of high walls and the nightly care of the relatively young and fit lady.



CAMPANULA TROEGERAE

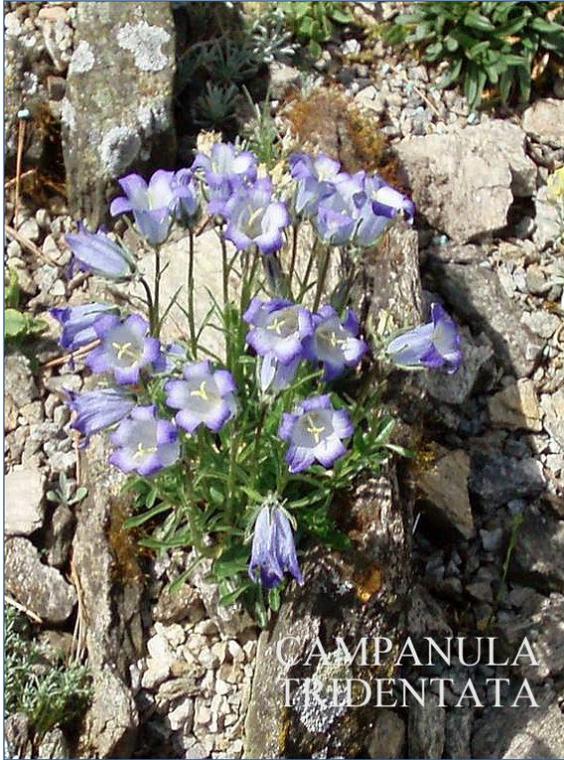
Campanula troegerae is a Turkish saxatile plant from the high cliffs of Coruh district in Eastern Anatolia. Plants are grown here with an east-north exposure and they love having only the morning sun in east facing crevices. These plants are deciduous after flowering and Mrs. Zíková is considering the possibility to propagate them in sand, from root cuttings. Her plant is from German nursery FlorAlpin of Herr Schmidt). Seed in seed exchanges is nearly always false and collecting seed in Turkey today is nigh impossible. The true species has very flat open saucer-like flowers. It can hybridise with *C. choruhensis* or *C. betulifolia*.



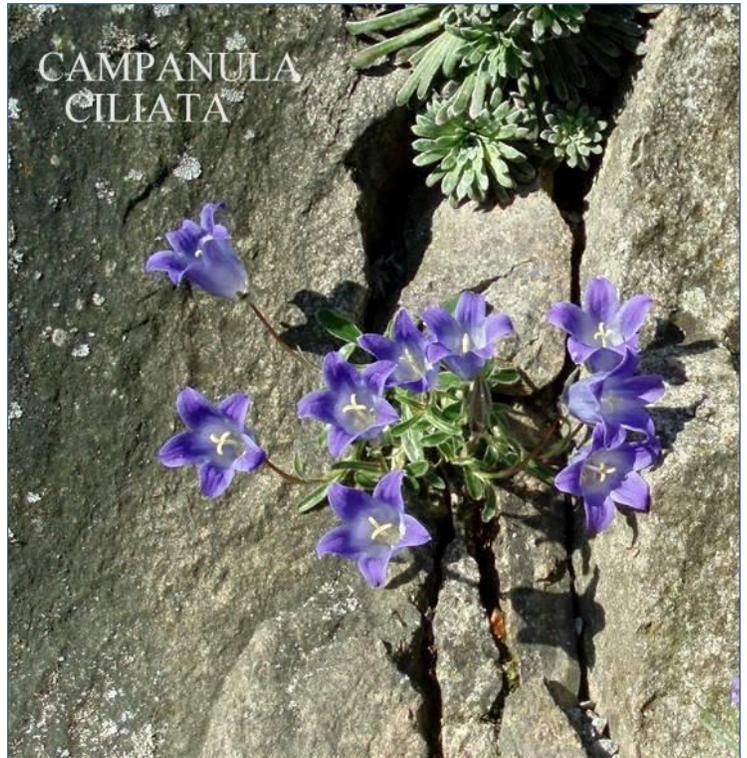
Campanula alpestris is short lived in gardens, seedlings behave as a biennial (two years of life and a need to always sow a new generation). Its long trumpets are divine.

Campanula sosnowskyi is a Caucasian newcomer to our gardens. It is not a easy plant to cultivate. Mrs Zíková got a piece from her friend Milan Odvárka (the owner of the largest rock garden in Bohemia) and discovered that this species (when it is happy in a gritty soil in a sunny place) is able to run in the substrate and show flowers 6-8 cm across. Of course, she divided her plant to please her friends so long as their plants decided to die. She has now only one rosette!

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Campanula tridentata is another Caucasian bellflower which is often misnamed when it comes from the seed exchanges. The true one is lovely blooming gem for a sheltered position without predators and is a little bit tricky and untamed alpine plant.



Campanula ciliata from the alpine levels of Caucasus is from seed of Czech collectors. It is botanically close to *C. tridentata*. A steep crevice with this dwarf bluebell is well filled with flat stones wedged in with a hammer.



Two outstanding chance seedlings appeared in her crevices probably as the open love area for *Campanula carpatica* f. *alba* and *Campanula raineri*.

The white seedling is well established in a sunny place in the neutral soil and a blue sister seedling is visible behind. We can see that better focus at selfsowing and clever selection can bring new generation of fine strong well adapted plants into our crevices.

***Campanula* seedlings**

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Campanula x 'Blithe Spirit'

All photos, pages 15 to 22 by Zdena Kosourová.

The snow-white ***Campanula* x 'Blithe Spirit'** is the result of intelligent observation and selection after breeding your own seedlings (a new New Zealand garden cross).

I have two pictures with American alpines. ***Erigeron aureus*** is a neat mountain daisy which enjoys rather cooler conditions. Here four plants are very content in broader crevices. In the middle is the paler, seedling of the late Scottish-based plantsman, Jack Drake, called ***Erigeron* 'Canary Bird'** which is easier than its relative *E. aureus*.



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Phlox albomarginata

Western American microphloxes are often tricky in normal soil of lowland gardens. I found them short lived at my hot Beauty Slope but at prominent cool places with light deep substrates they can be more permanent as ***Phlox albomarginata*** is in Hana's rock garden. This newly introduced species is from alpine level limestone screes in Montana and Graham Nicholls has reported good seed production in the UK.

One of the alpine glories of the Dianthus race is ***Dianthus alpinus*** in its best forms. This is the rare plant to be seen at present rock gardens. It is not too perennial and Carnation Fly loves it. The secret could be to keep always young promising individuals.

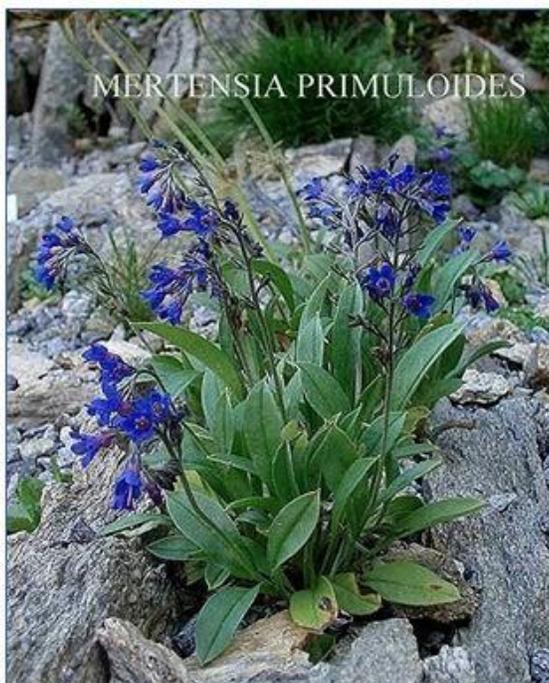
Below: *Dianthus alpinus*



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A very desirable distant relative of *Primula auricula* is ***Primula wulfeniana*** from Eastern Alps. Let us enjoy its picture showing hard rosettes with narrow glossy acutely-pointed dark green leaves and umbels of three or more large, ruby-purple, flowers.



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Mertensia primuloides from the Himalaya is happy in a deep cool crevice. It has tufts of shorter hairy stems and leaves and dense racemes of indigo-blue flowers.

In some shady corner we can see together with Hepaticas a Japanese woodland beauty ***Shortia uniflora*** in a wedding white form. It is small baby plant but a success in open soil without the aid of Scandinavian peat blocks.

The good influence of Denver Botanic Gardens is seen in modern cultivars of the African prostrate moisture loving Delospermas. They are not happy in my steppe garden with naked (snow-less) winters. Better chances are with Juno Irises from Anatolia. Shockingly pretty is this little-known and unspoken ***Iris sari subsp. manissadjanii*** (syn. ***Iris manissadjanii***). Why is some special police not controlling some of these acrobatic botanical names?



Iris sari subsp. manissadjanii (syn. *Iris manissadjanii*)

The garden is quite long, broader at the end. There is large flat scree with some Daphnes, Phloxes and classic European Gentianas. Stony cliffs run towards high brick walls which are losing old plaster from their wet surfaces. Last year's visit to this remarkable garden with the well-known gardener Harry Jans was a great time for me. There was plenty of food there for his hungry digital camera and I have the privilege to publish his pictures in the pages of the IRG.

Harry made a portrait here of a very short Far East ***Aquilegia hybrida*** cultivar with sugary rose flowers, probably from some Dutch nursery. Dwarf Columbines are short lived in many gardens.



Aquilegia hybrida cultivar – photo by Harry Jans

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It was a nice surprise to see this happy white daisy from the Atlas Mts. of Morocco - this has many names and not very likely to be fully hardy in our continental gardens. I prefer to name it ***Rhodanthemum catananche*** rather than *Chrysanthemum* or *Leucanthum*. I must try it one day if I am able to obtain it free of charge (a gift or charity for old man). (This is also the cover picture of this IRG.)

American *Townsendias* have the behaviour of hyperactive kids: they never stay long at my place. I hope that the shiny gray ***Townsendia incana***, which I met in flat lands of Colorado near Denver, is able to stay longer as it apparently does with Hana Ziková.



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I admire this high crevice outcrop with compact green cushion plants and *Gentiana angustifolia* 'Iceberg' under it together with good blue *Polygala calcarea* 'Lillet'.



Some lucky growers in Czechia spread an idea that the American Wenatchee Mountains plant called *Lewisia tweedyi* is a beautiful weed with them. I will surely try it at one fine day of a fine year in future.

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The entrance to the special garden of Hana Zíková has a fine guardian plant to the left of the large farmers gate. It is the Caucasian *Milkwitch* peony known as ***Paeonia mlokosewitschii***. The deeper yellow the better! But a really saturated yellow paeony of type is only a sweet dream of the impressionist in us.

Z.Z.

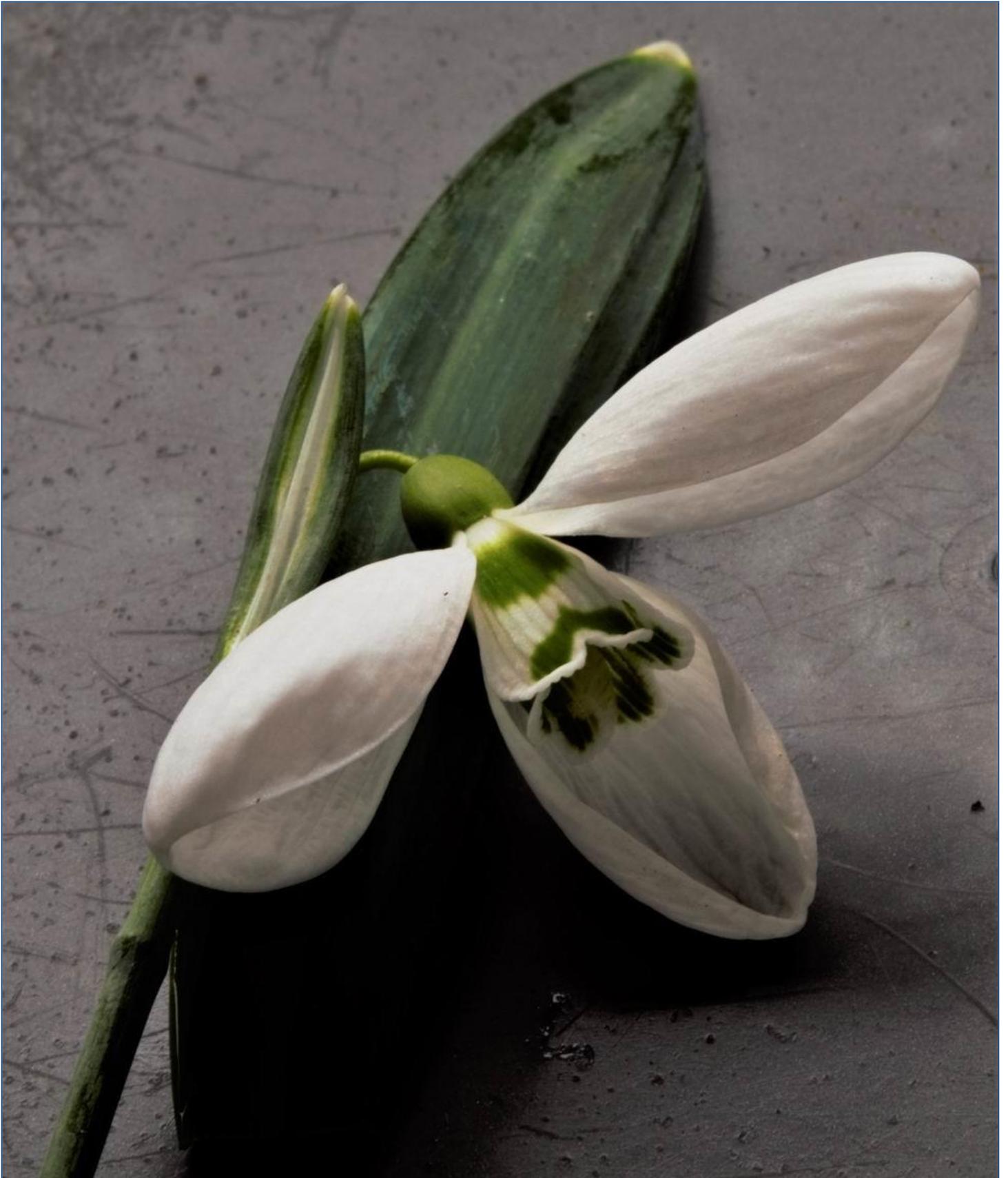
This photo of Zdeněk Zvolánek with [Harry Jans](#) – taken at the Prague church garden in Charles Square where the [KSP](#) alpine plant shows are held – was taken by Cliff Booker.



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---World of Bulbs---

---Plant Description---



Galanthus plicatus 'Harley Milne'

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***Galanthus plicatus* 'Harley Milne'** text and photos, Ian Christie

For several years we have been observing a colony of *Galanthus plicatus* which were planted over 100 years ago at Brechin Castle. These are growing alongside large swathes of *G. nivalis* and several interesting hybrids have been produced.

G. plicatus is easily recognised as the broad shiny green leaves are ribbed and emerge folded (plicate). We have selected several outstanding forms over the years giving most names that reflect their origin, by including Castle or Brechin in the names. I have taken many experts and enthusiasts from around the world to see these special snowdrops; one such was the late Harley Milne, a past President of the Scottish Rock Garden Club. Harley served the Club in several offices over many years and was always tremendously supportive, not just for me personally, he also had a total dedication to SRGC.



Left, above: Henrik Zetterlund, Sandy Leven and Harley Milne – pictured at Chelsea Flower Show by Ian Young. Right, above: Harley Milne judging at an Edinburgh SRGC Show with Julia Corden and Sandy Leven.

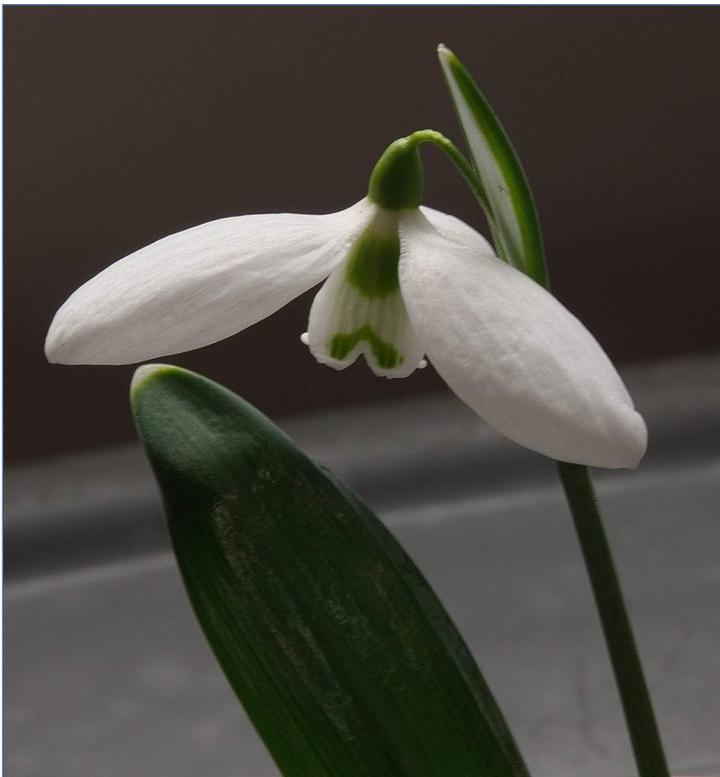


A gathering of Presidents, past and present, at the celebrations for the 75th Anniversary in 2008: right to left - Harley Milne, Peter Semple, Ian Bainbridge, Glassford Sprunt, Bette Ivey, Ian Young, Sandy Leven and Ian Christie.

Below: Harley and Winnie Milne



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I am growing several pots with selected *G. plicatus* and when they flowered this year I decided to choose a superb form from the *G. plicatus byzantinus* section which I thought would be a fine tribute to name for Harley. This selection has two inner marks, with pristine white bowl-shaped flowers standing on erect stems 4 to 6 inches (10 to 15cms) high. The pot-full had a dozen flowers and seemed just a wee bit special. I have sent some bulbs to Winnie, Harley's widow, who is also a great supporter of the SRGC. These are now planted in their garden near Aviemore. It will take time to bulk this up for general sale sometime in the future but we think it is worth the wait. I.C.

Galanthus plicatus 'Harley Milne'



Galanthus plicatus 'Harley Milne'

J. Harley A. Milne of Kincaig and Edinburgh, died peacefully, in his 84th year, on Friday, March 25, 2016, in Raigmore Hospital, Inverness. Harley was the loving and much loved husband of Winnie, a dear father of Donald, Andrew and Roderick, much loved granddad of Ruaridh, Struan, Tom and Archie and father-in-law to Rosie and Nicki.