

Hon Secretary's Notes

The Crocus Group now consists of 34 members, that being the number of those who notified me that they would like to continue to receive future Bulletins. We also gained a number of new members as a result of a mention in the A.G.S. Bulletin.

Please could members let me have lists of crocus species they grow in grass, together with any relevant observations (see Brian Mathew's notes on page 2) and we will try and produce a longer article on the subject in a future bulletin.

To start the ball rolling I have noticed that C. pulchellus only appears to naturalize itself where the soil is acid. On my fossil coral-reef C. speciosus is far more successful particularly the darker blue forms. C. kotchyanus is spreading rapidly, both blue and white forms and C. medius has survived for about 20 years without increasing much. C. ochroleucus, though a pest in my flower beds, seems unwilling to fight when put into grass.

I derive enormous pleasure from seeing my crocuses seeding themselves around in grass, looking exactly as they would in the wild.

Primrose Warburg  
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PROGRAMME 1983/84

Saturday 15th October 1983

You are invited to visit the garden of your Hon Sec - address above - telephone Oxford 247883 for instructions about how to find it. Come at 11 a.m. for coffee. Bring sandwiches and I will provide some hot soup. After lunch, if you are still keen, Mrs. E. Parker-Jervis who lives at Longworth, 15 minutes drive towards Swindon, is willing to show us her crocuses between 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. My garden is likely to be muddy and gumboots are an advantage. All my crocuses are grown outside so do not expect a cosy greenhouse.

Saturday 3rd March 1984

Brian Mathew has offered to show us his private collection of crocuses - arrive at 10.30 a.m. at:- 90 Foley Road, Claygate, Esher, Surrey. Afterwards he suggests we go on to Wisley (not far away) have a picnic lunch at the cafeteria and then he will show us any crocuses that are in flower in the Wisley gardens.

Sunday 11th March 1984

Mr. & Mrs. Crook have kindly invited us to their garden at:- 14 The Uplands, Harpenden, Herts. Arrive at 11 a.m. and bring yourselves a picnic lunch. There is a very interesting collection of crocuses, in frames and planted out in the garden, many of them collected by Mr. & Mrs. Crook.

Tuesday 17th April 1984

Crocus lecture by C.D. Brickell, the Director of Wisley. 6 p.m. R.H.S. New Hall, followed by an auction of crocus corms. Please come and support our funds by bringing and buying - otherwise you might have to pay a Crocus Group subscription. . . . .

If you have any unusual crocuses out at the time of any of these meetings, please bring them along to show to the rest of us.

Primrose Warburg

Some notes on Crocus lecture by B. Mathew - Spring 1983

The slides shown were mostly taken by Prof. T. Baytop of Istanbul University who has done a great deal to further our knowledge of the genus in Turkey.

C. dispathaceus This was originally thought to be a Syrian plant, apparently having reached Bowles by way of Aleppo. It has since been collected there again and is a remarkable plant with narrow wine-coloured perianth segments. Although a member of the sativus group it does not have the three lovely red style branches which produce saffron; they are usually small and yellow or pale orange. Obviously such a distinct plant was thought to be a species in its own right but more recently it has been collected in southern Turkey and these plants show considerable variation, some with wider perianth segments and a more lilac-purple flower colour. In fact some of these approach C. pallasii in their appearance and I have come to the conclusion that it is better to regard C. dispathaceus as a subspecies of C. pallasii. It is unfortunate that Syria is a difficult country to visit for some recollections of the really deep wine coloured form would be welcome, especially living corms to cultivate.

C. baytopionum Since its 'discovery' on Honaz Dag in Turkey 10 years ago, this gorgeous species has been located in two other places in south west Turkey. It appears to be restricted to limestone screes which are at a sufficiently high altitude to have a good snow cover and fairly cool growing conditions. I thought it would be fairly easy to cultivate but it has not proved to be all that accommodating, although I must admit that I have not been bold enough to try it out of doors which is maybe what it needs. The colour is an extraordinary shade of blue and so far I have been unable to capture it on colour film; if the sun is bright it comes out whitish and on a dull day it is greyish-blue so I am not sure what to try next.

C. pelistericus Although only described as a new species in 1976, this Yugoslav plant was collected as long ago as 1935 by the Rev. and Mrs. Thompson on their Balkan travels. Their herbarium material has resided at Kew, misidentified, ever since. Although the species bears some resemblance to C. veluchensis, in the violet flowers with a white throat, there is no close relationship and it is to C. scardicus that it is most closely allied. C. pelistericus is a plant of peaty alpine turf which never dries out so in cultivation must be treated more like a high alpine than a bulbous plant. The leaves stay green right through the summer and in autumn root and shoot activity begins again although flowering is not until late spring. I think it will probably do better in Scottish gardens than in the south, as does C. scardicus.

C. gargaricus The original collections of Crocus gargaricus came from Mt. Gargarus (Mt. Ida), now known as Kaz Dag, in western Turkey. More recent introductions have been made from the Bithynian Mt. Olympus, or Ulu Dag, which is very easy of access with a good road and cable cars up to the alpine meadows. A third site has now been found near Goktepe in south western Turkey. It is interesting to note that the Kaz Dag and Goktepe populations of this species differ in their corm characters from the Ulu Dag plants. Corms of the latter have a finely netted tunic and stolons are produced giving rise to dense stands of plants produced by vegetative means. On Kaz Dag and Goktepe the plants do not appear to increase by this means and the corm tunics are coarsely netted. I have both in cultivation now and will observe them more closely to see if they should be regarded as taxonomically distinct.

C. speciosus Recently I have been sent some crocus specimens by Prof. Phitos of Patras University, which he collected in northern Greece. They undoubtedly represent 'straight' C. speciosus so we now have a firm record of this from the Balkans. All previous material I have seen under this name from Greece, Yugoslavia and European Turkey has in fact been C. pulchellus.

C. abantensis This exciting species was found in 1973 on the slopes surrounding Lake Abant in north west Turkey, a place of easy access and quite well-known botanically. I suspect that it had been overlooked because it occurs in the same area as a similarly coloured Crocus biflorus variant, subsp. pulchricolor. They are both a rather rich blue in the best forms, although like almost all crocuses in the wild there is a lot of variation and for garden purposes 'good' forms must be selected. It has a reticulate corm tunic so is quite unlike C. biflorus in this respect and it

appears to be genetically unrelated. So far it has not done very well in cultivation but at least I have not lost it altogether and it may be just a case of finding out what its requirements are. I have a pure white form of it, collected in amongst the normal blue forms. I am trying to build up as complete a collection of albino crocuses as possible and if anyone could help I should be grateful. To date I have white forms of:- abantensis, cartwrightianus, caspius, corsicus, goulimyi, imperati, kotschyanus, laevigatus, longiflorus, minimus, ochroleucus (the albino has no yellow in the throat), oreocreticus, pestalozzae, pulchellus, sieberi, speciosus, thomasi, tommasinianus, veluchensis, vernus and versicolor (if it has survived this year). Obviously any others would be much appreciated. I have not of course listed those in which the flowers are normally white, such as C. niveus; in this species lilac forms are the more unusual. What a perverse crowd we gardeners are!

Several of the species, which are normally violet or lilac with a buff shading on the outside, produce albinos which have a yellow exterior and these are especially attractive - for example C. laevigatus, C. corsicus and C. minimus. One sad loss in my 'albino collection' this year has been a much-prized white C. cyprius which cropped up in a pot of blue ones; the mice were especially active during the winter and several other species departed this life.

C. alatavicus and C. korolkowii Of these two species, I made the comment in 'The Crocus' that although their areas of distribution met near Tashkent I had no evidence to suggest that the two occurred together in any locality. Janis Ruksans of Latvia has now kindly sent me information to the contrary and a slide showing the two species growing right alongside each other. The locality is in Uzbekistan, in the Seravschan Mountains. He comments that no intermediates were seen.

C. biliottii Sadly, we will have to get used to calling this C. aereus. The type locality of Herbert's C. aereus is the same as that given by Maw (40 years later) for his C. biliottii, and C. aereus must therefore under the International Rules of Nomenclature, take precedence. There is now a clause which allows for a species name to be conserved, but only if the plant in question is of considerable economic importance; that can hardly be said of C. biliottii! What of the 'C. aereus' which has been around as a name in literature and catalogues for quite a long time? Certainly the nursery plant of this name seems to be one of the variants of C. biflorus subsp. pulchricolor, the fine blue crocus which is very common on Ulu Dag in Turkey. Paul Furse also used C. aereus for blue Iranian forms of the more easterly occurring C. biflorus subsp. tauri.

#### Crocus in grass

I have been planting out any spare crocus corms I have in a small area of rough grass, and other 'bulbs' as well, in an effort to find out what will succeed. Apart from the obvious ones like C. vernus variants, C. tommasinianus, C. nudiflorus and C. chrysanthus vars., I have been delighted to find that C. ochroleucus is making an expanding population and flowers freely and C. banaticus has moved itself from a heather bed into the lawn. C. valuchensis appeared 'on its own' last year (probably seeded from the bulb frame), and C. laevigatus flowered well. It would be interesting to gather together a list of those species which are known to survive this treatment. Our Secretary has quite a number of species in grass, Chris Bricknell has a large population of C. serotinus (C. asturicus) in his lawn, and there must be many other examples. George Maw's plantings at Benthall include C. speciosus and C. pulchellus in large numbers, thriving together in grass and apparently not hybridizing. In my garden the corms seem to be mouse-proof when growing in turf, and are infinitely less trouble than all those pots!