

# **Crocus Group Bulletin No. 35**

## **Summer 2007**

<b>Patron</b>	<b>Brian Mathew MBE VMH</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>Committee</b>	<b>Ray Cobb</b>	<b>Home</b>	<b>135</b>
	<b>Alan Edwards</b>	<b>Overseas</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Membership</b>	<b>Ann Borrill</b>		
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<b>Hon. Sec.</b>	<b>David Stephens</b>		

### **Hon. Sec. Notes**

Yet another strange spring growing season, April was the warmest on record with summer like temperatures in the UK; obviously, the Crocus went dormant earlier than used to be normal. I don't know if there is a connection with global warming, but for the last few years there has been less seed set on Crocus than I used to remember. This year has been particularly bad, not one person I know has had a good seed harvest. Still, others had it worse; Janis Ruksans in Latvia tells me that he has lost a lot of his Crocus to savagely low temperatures and frosts in February.

The *Crocus* Group sometimes issues one, sometimes two publications a year. The main Bulletin, which has a sequential issue number, is sent out in the summer each year. The spring newsletter, which does not have an issue number, is sent out in January to UK members only, as a reminder for the spring visits and seed exchange. Sometimes, as this year, a spring newsletter was not issued as no spring visits were arranged.

### **Seed exchange 2007**

**Rule 1.** If you are a donor, send seed to me before 31.7.2007

**Rule 2.** If you are not a donor but want a seed list, send a SAE to me before 31.7.2007

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.

**David Stephens, Green Hollow, 76 South Terrace, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 2AQ.**

### **Crocus from seed**

Every year in August I sow the annual batch of *Crocus* seed. This can be from a variety of sources, i.e. from my own seed bank, from collections that year by friends, my own collections and from cultivated plants. I normally sow between 80 – 150 pots of seed each year, and after about the third year have had a succession of flowerings each year thereafter. Normally I would expect to wait 3 – 4 years to see the first flowers from these sowings. The quickest I have had are *Crocus gilanicus* that produced one flower in a pot of 20 seedlings in the autumn of two years after sowing, i.e. 27 months, and a flower in a pot of seedlings of *Crocus gargaricus* that came 18 months after sowing. **S**

### **Growing from seed**

The *Crocus* Group seed exchange has always sent seed out in the first week of September with the instruction that this is the optimum time to sow them. I recently noticed when reading Ian Young's bulb log on the Scottish Rock Garden Club website the following paragraph that discusses his views on the time of sowing and conditions of seed storage. **S**

"I store *Crocus* and similar types of seed in plastic packets filled with fine dry sand until late August/September when I sow it. The reason for doing this is that it prevents them drying out too much and in my view closely imitates the conditions that the seed would experience in the wild. OK I hear you say that the seed is sown as soon as the capsule splits in the wild and there are no plastic bags involved. Yes but in the wild the soils that the seed is shed onto is warm and dry for the summer before the autumn rain storms come along - it is not that way in my part of the UK where the soils are more likely to be cool and moist. An alternative method, if I had space, would be to sow the seed as soon as the capsule splits into dry compost and keep it dry under glass until the autumn watering. I used to, but no longer place the seed bags in a fridge as I believe the seeds may need a warm period for the embryo to fully form and I get better germination if I store them out of direct sunlight in the potting shed until sowing time. I normally remove the seeds from the capsules before placing them in the bags of sand but sometimes of necessity (if I am going to be away) I cut off the pods before they have opened and place them in a bag with sand. The sand serves to absorb the moisture from the capsules and prevents the seeds just rotting off as they would have without the sand". **Ian Young**

### **Kew monocot checklist**

Kew has recently made online a definitive checklist of all the world's monocotyledons with their synonyms in a searchable database [www.kew.org/wcsp/monocots](http://www.kew.org/wcsp/monocots). Obviously I looked up *Crocus* and found the list to be comprehensive and relatively correct as far as I am concerned. There are a few interesting listings:-

### ***chrysanthus* ssp *multifolius* Papan. & Zacharoff 1980.**

I've never heard of this one!!

### ***danfordiae* ssp *kurdistanicus* Maroofi & Assadi 2002.**

Or this recently described one from N W Iran

### ***ligusticus* Mariotti 1988.**

This is given as the correct name for *medius* which is dropped into synonymy. I have read Mariotti's paper giving his explanation for this name change and I have to admit it makes a lot of sense. This was mentioned in the spring 1999 newsletter in an article about *Crocus medius*.

### ***naqabensis* Al Eisawi & Kiswani 2001.**

I have been to the type locality for this recently described species at Ras an Naqb in Southern Jordan. There are two *Crocus* in the area, *pallasii haussknechtii* & *cancellatus damascenus*. There was no sign of this new species in the area, and having looked at the photograph of it in Al Eisawi's 'Wild Flowers of Jordan' I am tempted to think that he has mistakenly described the local form of *pallasii haussknechtii* as a new species. I could of course be wrong; there may be a population I did not find.

### ***rujanensis* Randjel. & D. A Hill 1990**

This has been in cultivation for a long time, the *Crocus* Group seed list being instrumental in distributing it. Most of us place it as a disjunct population of *sieberi sublimis* from Kosovo.

### ***suworowianus* K. Koch 1848**

I was surprised to find this listed as a species. I am not saying it shouldn't be, but rather that Brian confirmed it as a subspecies of *kotschyanus* in his 1982 monograph 'The *Crocus*' and I wasn't aware that its status had changed. There is quite a complicated discussion that suggests that the original plant described as *suworowianus* by Koch was a yellow flowered taxon from the Caucasus and that the white flowered plant from NE Turkey is something else. If we accept this argument, then the white flowered plant still needs a name and the Kew list does not appear to contain a new name to accommodate this. **S**

## Bronze *flavus*

In 2004 Norman Stevens and I found a new site for *Crocus flavus* well to the east of its previously known most easterly populations in western Turkey. This plant is a lovely form with bronze stippling to the external segments. In 2006 we found another site for this same plant, quite a long way from the previous site. There appear to be some morphological differences between these forms of *flavus* and the type, other than just colour and geography, and they therefore probably warrant subspecific status. **S**

## *Crocus biflorus* update

To quote what Brian wrote in 'The *Crocus*' in 1982:-

"The common spring-flowering 'annulate' *Crocus biflorus* constitutes one of the major taxonomic problems in the whole genus....."

In the ensuing 25 years, the situation has if anything, become more confused, particularly around the range of *biflorus* taxa that grow in Anatolian Turkey. Many of us who have travelled there have noticed that there are populations of *biflorus* that just don't fit into the existing taxonomic framework.

Two of our German members, Helmut Kerndorff and Erich Pasche have visited Turkey many times and undertaken a considerable amount of research over the last 15 – 20 years. They have published their findings in a three part paper '*Crocus biflorus* in Anatolia'; Parts 1 and 2 in The Plantsman in 2003 and 2004 respectively, and Part 3 in Linzer biol. Beitr. in 2006.

In that paper there is a careful explanation of how a painstaking statistical analysis of measured morphological criteria was used to determine relationships between taxa, and to assign observed populations into subspecies. In this process several populations that did not conform to existing subspecific criteria have been described as new subspecies.

The current situation as I understand it is shown in the table below. **S**.

## Subspecies of *Crocus biflorus* Miller

1	<i>adamii</i> (Gay) B. Mathew	
2	<i>albo-coronatus</i> Kerndorff	Herbertia 1993 49 (1&2) Two new taxa in Turkish <i>Crocus</i>
3	<i>alexandri</i> (Nacic ex Velen.) B. Mathew	
4	<i>artvinensis</i> (Philippov) B. Mathew	
5	<i>atrospermus</i> Kerndorff & Pasche	The Plantsman 2003 Vol. 2 Part 2 <i>Crocus biflorus</i> in Anatolia Pt 1
6	<i>biflorus</i> Miller	
7	<i>caelestis</i> Kerndorff & Pasche	Linzer biol. Beitr. 2006 38(1) <i>Crocus biflorus</i> in Anatolia Pt 3
8	<i>caricus</i> Kerndorff & Pasche	Linzer biol. Beitr. 2004 36(1) Two new Taxa of the <i>Crocus biflorus</i> aggregate from Turkey
9	<i>crewei</i> (Hook. fil.) B. Mathew	
10	<i>fibroannulatus</i> Kerndorff & Pasche	Linzer biol. Beitr. 1997 29(1) Zwei bemerkenswerte Taxa des <i>Crocus biflorus</i> - Komplexes aus der Nordostturkei
11	<i>ionopharynx</i> Kerndorff & Pasche	Linzer biol. Beitr. 2004 36(1) Two new Taxa of the <i>Crocus biflorus</i> aggregate from Turkey
12	<i>isauricus</i> (Siehe ex Bowles) B. Mathew	
13	<i>leucostylosus</i> Kerndorff & Pasche	The Plantsman 2003 Vol. 2 Part 2 <i>Crocus biflorus</i> in Anatolia Pt 1
14	<i>melantherus</i> (Boiss. & Orph. ex) B. Mathew	
15	<i>munzurensis</i> Kerndorff & Pasche	Mentioned in The Plantsman 2003 Vol. 2 Part 2 <i>Crocus biflorus</i> in Anatolia Pt 1, but not yet published
16	<i>nerimaniae</i> Yuzbasioglu S. & O. Varol *	The Plantsman 2004 Vol. 3 Part 2 A new autumn flowering <i>Crocus</i> from SW Turkey
17	<i>nubigena</i> (Herbert) B. Mathew	
18	<i>pseudonubigena</i> B. Mathew	
19	<i>pulchricolor</i> (Herbert) B. Mathew	
20	<i>punctatus</i> B. Mathew	
21	<i>stridii</i> (Pap. & Zach.) B. Mathew	
22	<i>tauri</i> (Maw) B. Mathew	
23	<i>wattiorum</i> B. Mathew **	The New Plantsman 1995 Vol. 2 Part 3 An interesting new autumn flowering <i>Crocus</i> from Turkey
24	<i>weldenii</i> (Hoppe & Furnr.) B. Mathew	
25	<i>yataganensis</i> Kerndorff & Pasche	Linzer biol. Beitr. 2006 38(1) <i>Crocus biflorus</i> in Anatolia Pt 3

\* *nerimaniae* was originally published at full species level

\*\* *wattiorum* was originally published as *biflorus* ssp. *wattiorum* and later upgraded by BM to a full species  
Kerndorff and Pasche treat both these taxa as subspecies of *biflorus*

### **35mm slides or negatives**

We recently purchased a rather expensive bit of equipment that converts 35mm slides or 35mm negative film into digital images. It is quite a time consuming process to do, but the results are very good. To have this done from a High Street photographic outlet is quite pricey, but to see your old photographs on a computer or television screen is quite something, and of course the images can be used in a digital projector. If you have slides or film you want converted into digital images and returned on a CD give us a ring to discuss. Price £20 for up to 30 slides or film negatives, larger quantities by negotiation.

**Tel. David or Rachael Stephens on 01306 886302.**

### **Articles required**

Would members please put pen to paper and let me have some articles for future bulletins. Just a few paragraphs will suffice if you don't think you can manage a page length. Any type of article will do, as long as it has *Crocus* as the main theme. I would particularly welcome articles from overseas members. Post to:

**David Stephens, Green Hollow, 76 South Terrace, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 2AQ, or  
E-mail to [thecrocusgroup@hotmail.com](mailto:thecrocusgroup@hotmail.com). S**