

# The Archibald Archive – Genus Guides

## FRITILLARIA

We list the most extensive range of seeds from *Fritillaria*, a genus of bulbs in Liliaceae very closely related to *Lilium* with over 100 species distributed through the temperate regions of the northern hemisphere. Its main centres are in south-east Europe and south-west Asia with secondary centres in western North America and eastern Asia. It is possibly the genus most esteemed by specialist bulb-enthusiasts in Europe at present. We work in close collaboration with the world's leading specialist growers, such as Norman Stevens and Bob and Rannveig Wallis in Britain, Janis Ruksans in Latvia, Michael Kammerlander in Germany and John Andrews in California. While several species are a challenge to cultivate and most are rare in cultivation, the majority are not at all difficult to grow in standard bulb-frame conditions or, perhaps better, in pots in a well-ventilated, unheated greenhouse in the cool, wet areas. Few, however, are easy to grow in the open garden in Britain. Most species grow in comparatively small populations in very limited areas in the wild and enthusiasts are making every effort to maintain fertile stock from seed in cultivation. We are progressing towards our aim of establishing authentic parent-stocks of all species, if possible raised from wild seeds, for the production of hand-pollinated seeds.

Seeds are best sown between midsummer and autumn to give them an initial warm spell. Most need the cold winter period to activate germination, which usually occurs as the weather warms in spring, at the same time as the shoots of adult bulbs appear.

Nomenclature: The world botanical authority on the genus is Martyn Rix and specialists await a modern monograph from him. In the meantime, we follow the names used in his accounts of this genus in 'The European Garden Flora', 'Flora Europaea' 'Flora Iranica' and 'Flora of Turkey'. For North American species, we generally follow 'The Jepson Manual' (1993), though we are not always wholly comfortable with this account. For Chinese species, the names in 'Flora of China' (accessible at 'Flora Online': <http://flora.huh.harvard.edu:8080/flora> ) are used for the present. Like other growers, we are just starting to become familiar with much new Chinese material.

Further information: 'The Bulb Book' by Martyn Rix & Roger Phillips provides a remarkably complete photographic record with brief, accurate notes. 'The Gardener's Guide to Growing Fritillaries' by Kevin Pratt & Michael Jefferson-Brown is primarily aimed at presenting some more widely cultivated representatives to the general gardener. Some names in this book do not follow the nomenclature of the Rix accounts in the standard floras. The chapter on 'The Genus *Fritillaria*' by David King in 'Bulbs of North America' (2001), ed. Jane McGary, gives a good accessible overview of the North Americans. 'Fritillaries' by C. Beck (1953) is excellent but now a rare book and the names are very out of date.