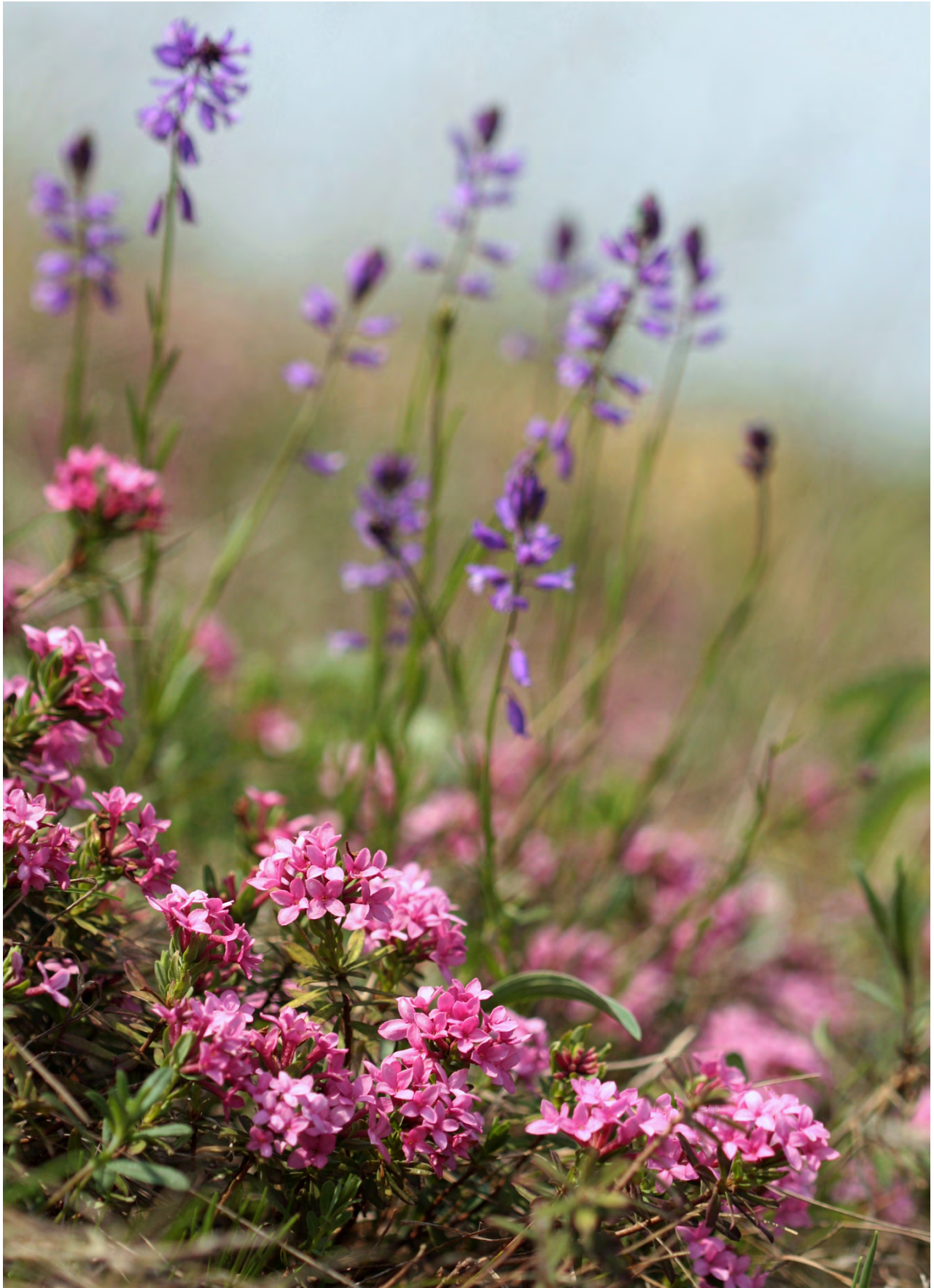


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May 2010



As we present IRG Issue 5 to you, we wish to thank those folks who have generously shared their words and pictures with us for your pleasure. There have been a pleasing number of offers of items for the future and we do hope that you will realise that the IRG project needs plenty more input to progress so we again invite you [to contact us](#) with your ideas, text and photos. The informal introductions to our Gardeners seem to be well received and our aim of encouraging further research by our readers into the various plants shown is also bearing fruit....we will continue to seed your minds and sow a little happiness with these tempting snippets!

Cover photo: *Daphne juliae* growing wild : Olga Bondareva



Daphne juliae with *Polygala* in the background.

Variegated leaf form of *D. juliae* in the wild



Olga is based in Moscow and has a country garden around 100kms east of the city. She travels widely; happily her camera always accompanies her.

----- GARDENS IN THE MOUNTAINS-----

The popularity of daphne both as garden plants and for pot culture is growing all the time with many new hybrids becoming more available and proving their worth. Time, we thought, for a trip to Russia for a look at one of the most beautiful of the wild daphne species.



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Daphne juliae by [Olga Bondareva](#)

There is a place in 'russian black earth' area which I visit every spring. The flowering steppe near Kursk city, around 500 kms south of Moscow, reminds me of my childhood and attracts me to its very rare and beautiful plants. *Daphne juliae* only grows in seven sites: places hidden in ravines between fields. It is closely related to *D. cneorum* but this Russian plant grows at low altitudes (~200 m above sea level) in limestone hills.

That area is dry and hot in summer with usually mild (but sometimes very hard) winters. The soil is "chernozem": black-coloured earth giving a high agricultural yield, containing up to 15% humus and also a high percentage of phosphoric acids, phosphorus and ammonia. It is very fertile and naturally granulated over the soft limestone beneath.

Daphne juliae is listed in and given protection by the Russian 'Red Data Book'; Красная книга, a



state document established for documenting rare and endangered species. The natural habitat of *D. juliae* is far from towns and busy roads, only farmers and botanists know where it is growing.

The daphne's main partner is the grass *Stipa capillata*. Two weeks after the daphnes bloom the steppe is full of Stipa feathers. A month later grasses are brown and only the Daphne is evergreen. Spring is most beautiful there with *Adonis vernalis*, *Iris aphylla*, *Pulsatilla patens*, *Clematis integrifolia*, *Androsace villosa*, *Primula veris* etc. *Daphne juliae* is a very decorative plant with great garden potential. It

has many flower and leaf forms and is very hardy. You can see [more about *D. juliae* and its companions in the SRGC Forum.](#)

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Diplarche multiflora Hook. F. & Thomson

by Dieter Zschummel

When we visited the Bai Ma Shan in the autumn of 2003, we walked up to one of the crests looking for *Chionocharis hookeri* ([IRG January 2010](#)) on the “acid” side of the road. Near the pass to Dechen, we crossed places (at about 4500 m), which are called “Schneetälchen” in the German language. These are small depressions where snow lingers for a longer time than usual.

Here, we came across three gentians (*G. emergens*, *wardii* and *decorata*)- all were in seed, but *decorata* had a few last flowers. *Primula dryadifolia* and a heather-like little shrublet (which we didn't identify) were also in seed.

Only later did we find out that the unknown plant was *Diplarche multiflora*.

The “Flora of China” and also the “Encyclopaedia of Alpines”^{*} mention two species of that genus: *D.d. multiflora* and *pauciflora*.

Diplarche belongs to the family Ericaceae (with some special features, which in the past were used to bring *Diplarche* nearer to Diapensiaceae) and is a genus of only these two members. The meaning of “*Diplarche*” is not fully understood (by me). Hooker wrote: “We have named this very remarkable genus *Diplarche*, alluding to the two series of stamens.” So the first part of the name may be explained by those “two series”, but for the Greek second part (*arche* = beginning / ancient etc.), I have no translation. [ED. Perhaps referring to a prototype of Diapensiaceae?]



Foliage of *Diplarche* growing with a gentian similar to *G. emergens*

The seeds we found were sown in the usual lean and lime-free soil in November 2003 and they germinated in the spring of 2004. The tiny seedlings stayed in their seed pot for three years in a

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frame with other sowings and were neglected (though did not become dry). After pricking out into a peat-based soil, they grew on, and in 2008, were planted into the open garden in or beside some peat bricks. In 2009 (in our garden) the first buds appeared but unfortunately did not develop fully into flowers. Happily, plants given to friends flowered in 2009. So, unlike the gentians found in its' company, *Diplarche multiflora* is growable for us. It is a nice shrublet for our gardens- not too difficult if you can give it a cool place without lime and enough water throughout the year.



In 2007 and 2009 we visited Tibet and came across the *Diplarche* twice near the villages of Rawu and Pome. In a valley north of Rawu it was still not in flower in the middle of June. We found it growing again together with a gentian, looking similar to *G. emergens* but with smaller and narrower flowers.

Near Pome, beside the road to the Galung La and on top of that Pass (about 4300m), we found flowers on it. In 2007, only one plant had a few early flowers.

At the same time of year in 2009, farther down the Pass, plants were in full bloom.

The plants shown look somewhat different; perhaps because of the different places and the phase of flowering. Without doubt, both examples belong to *Diplarche multiflora*: *D. pauciflora* should not have more than 8 flowers per inflorescence.



It is to be hoped that this small member of the Ericaceae will become more widely grown. Seed has been offered recently.

In 1999 a plant exhibited at the Chesterfield AGS Show was thought likely to have been the first time the plant had been seen on the show benches. The plant was first described in 1854 and there were some introductions to botanic gardens in the 1930s.

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Townsendia (?) *spathulata* by [Graham Nicholls](#), England

This taxon is still waiting to be identified by Kew. Brian Welzenbach of Bozeman, Montana, USA found it in 2006 in the Eastern Beartooth mountains of southwestern Montana at around 1980 m (6500'). Here it grows on top of steep ridges in shallow limestone scree. The range is very small: perhaps only a ½-mile strip of limestone. They grow with other scree dwellers like *Kelseya uniflora*, *Eritrichium howardii* and *Shoshonea pulvinata*.

The first photo is of my own plant grown from seed sent to me by Brian in 2007 and the second is of the plant in the wild. Because of the hairy leaves Brian has nicknamed the plant 'cottonballs' and it goes by this name at present as we are waiting for Kew to identify it. It may be a form of *Townsendia spathulata* or a new species.

It is easy in cultivation and grows quite fast with rosettes growing from the side each year. It also seems to be perennial. I had seed set on two of my plants this year and the seed germinated quickly.



Photos from the wild by Brian Welzenbach



There are many thoughts about townsendias being short lived but I have grown *Tt. spathulata*, *incana*, *hookeri*, *excapa*, *montana*, *nuttallii* and *T. rothrockii*, each for several years, some for many years, with no problems in the alpine house.

They do not like being soaked with water in the winter and that is when they will rot off.

'cottonballs'- an appropriate name

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----- MOUNTAINS IN THE GARDENS -----

Indoor Crevice Bed Gardening by Davie Sharp, Scotland

At times, even though one has planned for most eventualities, things go awry. Such a time occurred during the spring of 2007 when both Maggie and I were away from home. The first occasion was attending the Rock Garden Conference in Beroun (CZ), and a few weeks later we were roaming the Dolomites. It was during that time that a collection of 30 or so mature alpines, grown in 8 – 28cm clay pots plunged in a raised bed in an alpine house, succumbed to neglect. Many of the plants were upwards of 18 years old. Remedial action had to be taken!



My days of showing plants at Rock Garden shows were long gone so there was not the same need to grow plants in pots, so the action I took was to construct a permanent bed for the precious wee plants to grow, complete with irrigation system to satisfy their needs. The bed I eventually made was a limestone crevice raised bed, which was built on a base of 50cm of gritty sand with a further 8cm of equal parts by volume of garden compost, 1cm limestone grit and 1.5cm limestone grit. Planted in the crevices and at the base of the rocks were a host of diverse plants from both north and south hemispheres and from all points of the compass, from seed and presents given by kind

friends. When I look over the bed, which was extended in the autumn of 2009, there are a goodly number of plants given by generous growers of the Czech Republic.

In the bed you will find plants both difficult and easy for me to grow here in Scotland at a latitude of 57°N.

At the time of writing the plants that are showing their best are *Androsace- Aa. hirtella*, *villosa*, *vandellii* and *A. barbulata* var. *glabella*. *Draba rosularis* and *D. cappadocica* contrast well with their neighbour, *Pyrethrum leontopodium*.

Two daphnes are starting to show colour - a small *D. arbuscula* f. *platyclada*, which is showing long tube flower buds, and *D. x napolitana* 'Bramdean'. For the third year running, the small group of *Townsendia rothrockii* (grown from Klub Skalnickaru Praha, index Seminum 2005 – 2006 seed 1719/77) appears to be contented in the gritty limestone crevices as are their miniature cousins *T. spathulata*.

Three flowering primulas that have given a bright splash of colour are *P. albenensis*, *P. allionii* x 'Jackie Richards' and *P.* 'Kusum Krishna' which was raised by Scottish nurseryman Graeme Butler of [Rumblings Bridge Nursery](http://www.rumblingsbridge.co.uk), was awarded a Preliminary Commendation by the RHS joint Rock Garden Plant Committee in 2007.

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P. 'Kusum Krishna'

Davie Sharp



When I first built the crevice bed, there were few plants. Now, 3 years and one extension later, there are over 60 plants. I am impressed with the quality of the flowering plants and there is the added advantage of keeping me nice and dry and warm in the lee of the wind. New Zealand plants appreciate this home, too, such as the male (left) and female forms (right) of *Clematis marmoraria*.



Davie Sharp is a man with more mountain connections than the average rock gardener; he was a mountaineer and mountain rescue volunteer for years which fuelled his rock gardening passion for alpine plants. A popular SRGC member in demand for speaking engagements, Davie and his wife Maggie take great pleasure in seeing the gardens and methods of other gardeners on their travels as well as exploring the landscape.

MY

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Rocky Mountain Douglasia

By [Michal Hoppel](#) – Poznan, Poland

Douglasia montana - that small jewel from the primrose family may be seen in the Rocky Mountains in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming. It occurs on screes, dry alpine slopes and open ridges at an altitude between 1500 and 3000m. It grows together with *Phlox albomarginata* and *Draba oligosperma* in Big Belt Mountains and with *Physaria acutifolia* in the Bighorn Mountains. In May it blooms with usually solitary rose flowers on 0.5-2.5 cm stems. The foliage is needle-like in effect and may even look like small conifer seedlings. Plants may be very variable and one may be very tight and the other quite loose.

The variety with two flowers per inflorescence is sometimes called *D. montana* var. *biflora*. It is very floriferous even in cultivation.

Below: *D. montana* [Sawtell Peak, Idaho](#)
photo Barrie Porteous, Canada.



Douglasia montana is well established in cultivation and quite often available in specialized nurseries. My first plant came from the Czech Republic but went away to the alpinists' heaven the first winter due to rotting off at the neck. The next plants were planted in troughs under the roof overhang, which kept them dry in damp autumn and wet winter, suffering only the heaviest snowfall. They made very nice mounds of light green leaves covered with bright pink delicate Androsace-like flowers.

My *D. montana* grows in mineral granite substrate in a trough with a maximum of 20% organic matter and 2cm of top-dressing, so is definitely well drained. The trough is placed at the eastern side of my house with direct sunlight until 1pm and the plant itself is not exposed to direct sunlight being grown on an eastern slope in a 5cm crevice between two pieces of gneiss rock. The trough is watered by a capillary system from below and only occasionally from the top. That way I try to avoid excessive moisture near the root neck. A wet surface of the substrate in hot days could make the plant broil in the sun and quickly die. It requires a lot of moisture in spring but later in the summer may be quite drought-tolerant. I expect that mineral substrate, deep crevices and the trough itself help to keep roots moist and cool. I would not say it is an easy plant but by providing the described conditions it is not

problematic. It may be propagated from seed available on commercial seed-lists and seed-exchanges of rock garden clubs. This nice sweet, small beauty is definitely worthy of growing in our miniature rock gardens.

Literature: [Graham Nicholls 'Alpine Plants of North America'](#), [George Smith & Duncan Lowe 'The Genus Androsace', Flora of North America.](#)

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Pulsatilla vernalis in Montreal by René Giguère

photo Milan Halada

Pulsatilla vernalis was planted the crevice garden of the Montreal Botanics in May 2005 when Zdeněk and Joyce were here. We originally had two plants and now we have 10 so we gained 8 in 4 years. The only explanation is that it is self-seeding. It was planted on the left side of the path near the main central opening in the garden. At that place it is quite exposed to sun but mostly morning sun as it is on an east slope. It does get some afternoon sun but it is not as direct as morning sun. I noticed that the rocks are breaking down into flakes at that spot, leaving some finer particles where the seeds are germinating; perhaps this is influencing the germination? The seeds came from a member of the [Quebec Alpine and Rock Garden Society](#). We sowed them in 2004 and they were planted in the crevice in May 2005. We have no data of their source as the member who gave them had no data either. I am not too surprised at their self-sowing as I have seen this elsewhere in the alpine garden here.



Czech Tufa King in Bavaria by Zdeněk Zvolánek

Some western readers of the IRG might have a feeling that in these electronic pages the propaganda for Czech growers and their natural style of rock gardening is too intensive. This is just the opening period, in which one of the editors (the Czech one) has available good photographs and valuable information from this stony heart of Europe. In the near or distant future, when we will probably have the contributions of more authors, the percentage of news from Bohemia and Moravia will be lower.



Daphne arbuscula on limestone boulder

František (Franto) Paznocht

An international compromise in this presently unbalanced situation is to describe one remarkable and never finished tufa garden in northern Bavaria. It is intensively cultivated by a Czech emigrant, František (Franto) Paznocht from Mönchsroth village near the fascinating medieval town Dinkelsbühl.

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Franto had to learn German 40 years ago but is not able to write in English so I must inform briefly about his great achievements. He built himself a new house and beautiful artificial red stony walls of many raised beds surrounding the house. Visitors are stunned by the amount of tufa (soft travertine) boulders, which Franto skilfully placed to grow alpines and dwarf conifers in the pristine Bavarian air conditions. There is only one natural hard limestone rock in his landscaping: a six-ton limestone boulder planted with a lovely old compact *Daphne arbuscula* and ornamental *Larix decidua* 'Krejčí'. (ED: See later note on this cultivar) I have not seen his garden in springtime because the traditional German-Czech study weekends in Germany are always in October!



I did once see his Chinese *Delphinium likiangense*, which could be low enough for a rock garden and not so fussy like its Himalayan sisters.

His tufa surfaces and their supporting inner luxurious porous cavities are a paradise for a good collection of Kabschia Saxifrages. All are in a superb healthy condition with plenty of light at elevation 450m. One seedling of *Primula x 'Marven'* (*P. marginata x P. x venusta*) developed here into a beautiful dwarf primrose with dark purple flowers and a contrasting white-eye. It is evidently a hybrid and is distributed under a cultivar name 'Carina'.

My photograph of this cultivar is a portrait of our lost baby, because just after Joyce carefully cleaned and repotted it a few weeks ago, this new primrose vanished from our yard.



Another of Franto's distinctive hybrids is a phlox seedling with smaller leaves and very slow low growth and dark pink-purple flowers. The name of this valuable plant for small rock gardens is *Phlox x 'Frantonine'*. The concentration of the tufa king to plant all his rocks is now diluted by a strong new passion for growing dwarf tropical orchids and he is building a special green house for them.

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A note on *LARIX DECIDUA* 'KREJČÍ' by Jaroslav Kazbal, an expert on dwarf conifers, Prague.

The Czech collector of dwarf conifers, Mr. Krejčí, found in 1980 a strange looking plant he considered to be an offshoot of the damaged root of a neighbouring European larch. Time has proved it, however, to be a fascinating fasciation (cock's comb) that is very ornamental when trained vertically or horizontally. When grafted up side down it makes a sort of octopus-like plant with all those multiple buds and tufts of leaves coming out of them. It is a fine plant even when bare of leaves in the winter.



An American Connection : *Matthiola montana* Boiss.



All new Turkish plants from the famous [time of introductions](#) made by British collectors John Watson and Jim Archibald, have found their way to the warm hands of Panayoti Kelaidis in Colorado. A few of the first, which spread quickly, were *Veronica liwanensis* and *Campanula troegerae*. Panayoti, who always planted plenty of Acantholimon into the red Colorado soil can be called the God Father of Turkish plants in North America. He and [Rebecca Day-Skowron](#) are distributing seed of a very distinct *Matthiola montana*, which ZZ collected somewhere in the lower slopes of Dedegol Mts. (2.400 m) in Western Anatolia. The name is partially correct: it is a perennial plant 17cm high in seed from the Dedegol area, but its flower's are not

yellowish and the leaves are semi-entire lyrate and hairy. The plants of this dwarf tufted crucifer (brassica) come true from seed: flowers are relatively large and violet/old rose with a pretty yellow eye.

ZZ



[Panayoti Kelaidis](#) still has time between expeditions, to continue his long work with the [Denver Botanic Gardens](#). Thirty years and counting in horticulture with most of the world travelled in search of plants is pretty good going for a man who majored in ancient Chinese language and literature in college! He has a wide spread of interests but plants are a pervasive and persuasive passion.

MY

PK says "I derive enormous pleasure and inspiration from chlorophyll in all its manifestations."

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----Plant portrait: *Iris paradoxa*----



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Iris paradoxa

Some information from an article about Armenian Oncocyclus Iris (Six species) written by [Pavel Křivka](#) for the [Czech Bulletin Skalničky](#).

Pavel was co-author, with Vojtěch Holubec, of the 2006 book [The Caucasus and Its Flowers](#).

There is a paradox in every flower of this Turkish Armenian and Armenian species: the outer tepals are much smaller than the inner ones. The best concentration of *Iris paradoxa* is around Lake Sevan in Northern Armenia, at elevation 2000m, where it forms large populations.

It is an easy Iris to grow in Pavel's small lowland garden in Pardubice, where this species must share a bed with strawberries. It is a tough Onco, which can stand an attack of aggressive weeds. *Iris paradoxa* in cultivation grows well in all relatively open soil (not in solid clay). Stanislav Čepička's garden near Prague, on hot south facing slope of shale with no winter protection also provides a good home for this beautiful and healthy Iris.

Be careful when buying these Irises (Oncos) from large collections, for they are usually infested with bulb mites. It is better to buy from smaller dealers because their plants are usually clear of pests.



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----- WORLD OF BULBS -----

Narcissus assoanus

by [Cedrik Haškovec](#), Prague, Czech Republic



During my visit to Barcelona at the end of March this year, I visited Montserrat with a dream of seeing some tiny narcissus. My dream came true when I was on a hill above the monastery. It pleased me when I could see marvellous tiny (about 15 cm high) yellow *Narcissus assoanus* among the compact conglomerate rocks. The narcissus grew most usually as single plants, but some of them were in small clumps with several flowers. Besides the narcissus I also saw *Helleborus foetidus*. I look forward to visiting this botanically interesting area again in June.



Another Spanish *Narcissus assoanus* in the wild, pictured by [Rafa Diez Dominguez](#) in Segovia.



N. assoanus shown by [Margaret and Henry Taylor](#) in a Scottish Rock Garden Club Show.
Photo by Margaret Young

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----- REPORT FROM THE BEAUTY SLOPE -----

By Joyce Carruthers and Zdeněk Zvolánek



Do you not feel that Mother Earth is a little nervous this spring and her heart beat quite irregular? We have strangely irregular weather, which is uncomfortable for our plants and ourselves. Fortunately our part of Europe is the most stable and we have not even considered that our steep rockwork could collapse in an earthquake.

After 5 weeks without rain and relatively warm weather many plants were suffering and the flowering period was too short. In particular we felt the show of daphnes was not as impressive as usual.



We are sure that our best daphne is *D. cneorum* var. *pygmaea* 'Czech Song' introduced from the Maritime Alps. It flowered for ten days with extremely dense inflorescences embracing the ground.

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Daphne cneorum var. *cneorum* 'Czech Karst', from our neighbourhood, is later blooming and finally after a few days of heavy rain is showing its full charm.



Every year *D. x rollsdorfii* 'Wilhelm Schacht' and 'Arnold Cihlarz' give a consistently good performance. The latter, which is partly shaded, flowers for one week longer.

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A great feather in our cap is having kept alive after two bad continental winters, the tender *Daphne rodriguezii* (Balearic Islands), now established in our front south facing limestone crevice garden. It has a fine tender companion from the White Mountains in Crete- *Anchusa cespitosa*, which has a longer flowering period. Both plants enjoy reflections of heat and light from the facade of our house.

This May there is a terrific wave of saxatile and scree plants which we have introduced over the years from the relatively unknown Dedegol Mts. in Turkey. This limestone mass, reaching 3000m, which lies between two large lakes has an extremely rich flora. The first to flower was *Prunus prostrata* with many pale pink flowers (it will be eventually covered with edible red cherries, which no doubt our resident pine-martens will enjoy). The best *Aethionema* we have is *A. subulatum* from the rocky alpine slopes, where *Anchonium elichrysifolium* (yellow crucifer 10 cm high) grows in association and flowered for the first time this year.



Aethionema subulatum



Silene bolanthoides



Another member of this alpine plant community is *Silene bolanthoides* which also flowered for the first time this year. It has beautifully cut small white and pink corollas on a compact mat of foliage. Other desirable alpiners from this mountain, which flowered in April, were pale blue *Veronica caespitosa* and white-pink *Eunomia oppositifolia*.

The highlight of our introductions from this area is now in flower. It is the exquisite golden flowered *Linum cariense*, in effect a much better garden plant than *L. aretioides*.

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We do not have that native of Dedegol Dag, *Fritillaria aurea* in our garden so we are little nervous because some visitors, the great [Cyril Lafong](#) and Ian Christie, will find a dearth (of Frits) in our earth (about zero).

Cyril Lafong in the garden of ZZ and Joyce- photos [Ian Christie](#)



Born in warm Mauritius, Cyril Lafong has found himself perfectly attuned to the demands of growing alpine in his Scottish garden and is one of the greatest exhibitors ever in the shows of the SRGC. The quality of his plants, from Dionysias, through Daphnes to all sorts of bulbs, is legendary. Here Cyril admires a large daphne, even larger than his show plants, growing on the Beauty Slope!