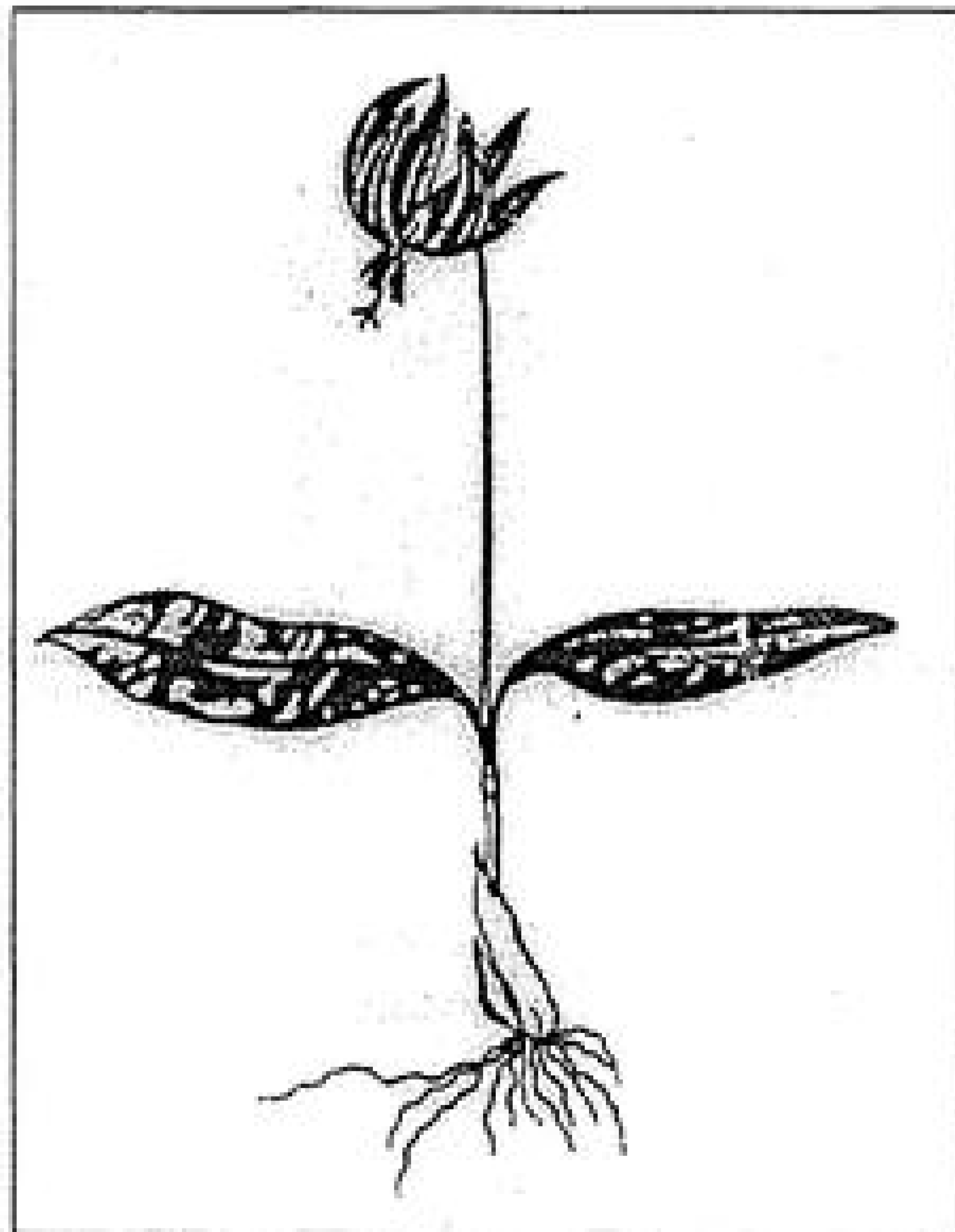


***THE BULB***  
***NEWSLETTER***



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## The Bulb Newsletter No. 34

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### ***Sunken genera, but not quite without trace***

In response to a query from Peter Maynard about the current status of various genera related to the African *Moraea*, including *Homeria*, we are including a brief report on the matter. In short, the result of studies by the Iridaceae specialist Peter Goldblatt is that the genera *Homeria*, *Galaxia*, *Gynandriris*, *Hexaglottis*, *Barnardiella* and *Roggeveldia* all 'disappear', subsumed within a greatly enlarged *Moraea*. In fact, it means that *Moraea* is not now wholly African and that there is a *Moraea* in the Mediterranean region (the ex *Gynandriris sisyrinchium*). For those who wish to go into the reasons for this recommendation, the paper is published in *Novon* (a Missouri Botanical Garden journal) Vol. 8, Number 4 (1998).

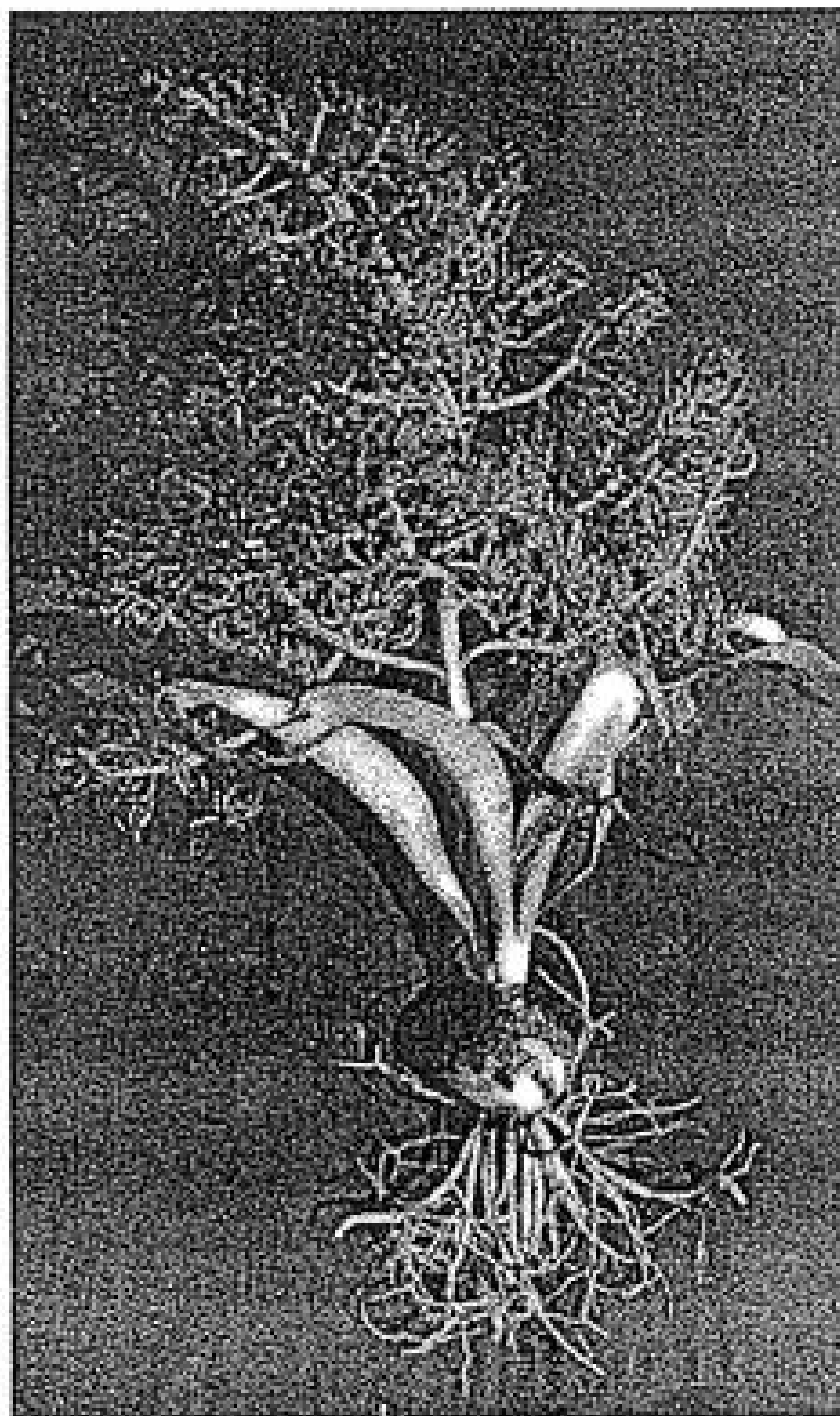
Peter Goldblatt explains that the morphological and anatomical evidence showing the likely relationships has now been confirmed by DNA sequence analysis, so that the above genera are all merged with *Moraea*. There is a considerable amount of discussion about the reasons for all this, and a table showing that most of the ex-genera are now recognised as sections within the genus *Moraea*, so the various 'units' that were previously called genera have not disappeared altogether; they are still there as sect. *Gynandriris*, sect. *Homeria*, etc.

The result of doing this is that the various new combinations have to be formally published, and these are quite extensive (for example, *Galaxia versicolor* becomes *Moraea versicolor*, *Homeria marlothii* becomes *Moraea marlothii*, etc.). In some cases it has been necessary to provide new names, where the epithet being transferred to *Moraea* cannot be used because there is already a *Moraea* of that name - for example, *Homeria hantamensis* (see BN 22:18) cannot become *Moraea hantamensis* because there already existed a species called *M. hantamensis*, described in 1882 by Klatt; so, in these cases, a 'nomen novum' has to be provided, in this particular instance *Homeria hantamensis* becomes *M. reflexa*. It would obviously take up too much room to list them all here, but any good botanical library will have or should be able to obtain that issue of *Novon*.

### ***A Monstrous Muscari***

A Turkish friend, Prof. Neriman Özhatay of Istanbul University, recently sent us a photo and specimen of a very strange plant, but a not unfamiliar one. It was bought in a market in Bodrum (south-western Turkey) from a street vendor who said that it had been found wild and because it was attractive she thought she might be able to sell it. It was then sent on to Neriman for identification. She guessed, quite correctly, that it is an aberrant form of the tassel hyacinth, *Muscari* (or *Leopoldia*) *comosum*, known as 'Plumosum' (or by its very appropriate synonym 'Monstrosum').

Some bulb enthusiasts will already be familiar with this since it is around in commerce



and not uncommon. They are all vegetatively propagated of course, since it has no means of producing seeds. Although it looks as if it is in flower there are no actual flowers. It produces an inflorescence - a raceme in this case - which repeatedly branches so that instead of each individual flower stalk ending in a flower, as in a simple raceme, it produces another raceme, which in turn branches to produce another raceme instead of a flower, which in turn, etc., etc., decreasing in size all the time. So what you end up with is a big fluffy purple mass of thread-like flower stems.

Exactly why it does this is anybody's guess, I don't know if it has ever been studied to see if a virus is involved. If it is a disease, it does not seem to be catching since I have not seen it on any other *Muscari*, or any other plant for that matter. The curious *Muscari armeniacum* 'Blue Spike' might be caused by something similar, but in that case each single flower seems to be replaced by a congested bunch of several flowers to give an effect like a blue version of purple sprouting broccoli!

Whether or not Neriman's specimen (shown above) of *M. comosum* from Bodrum is a garden throw-out of the commercial clone of 'Plumosum', or whether it is another similar sport that has occurred in the wild is not known.

## E.K.Balls - an additional note

John Blanchard has written in response to the short biography of E.K.Balls in the last BN (No. 32: 14-15) with some interesting extra information. He writes:

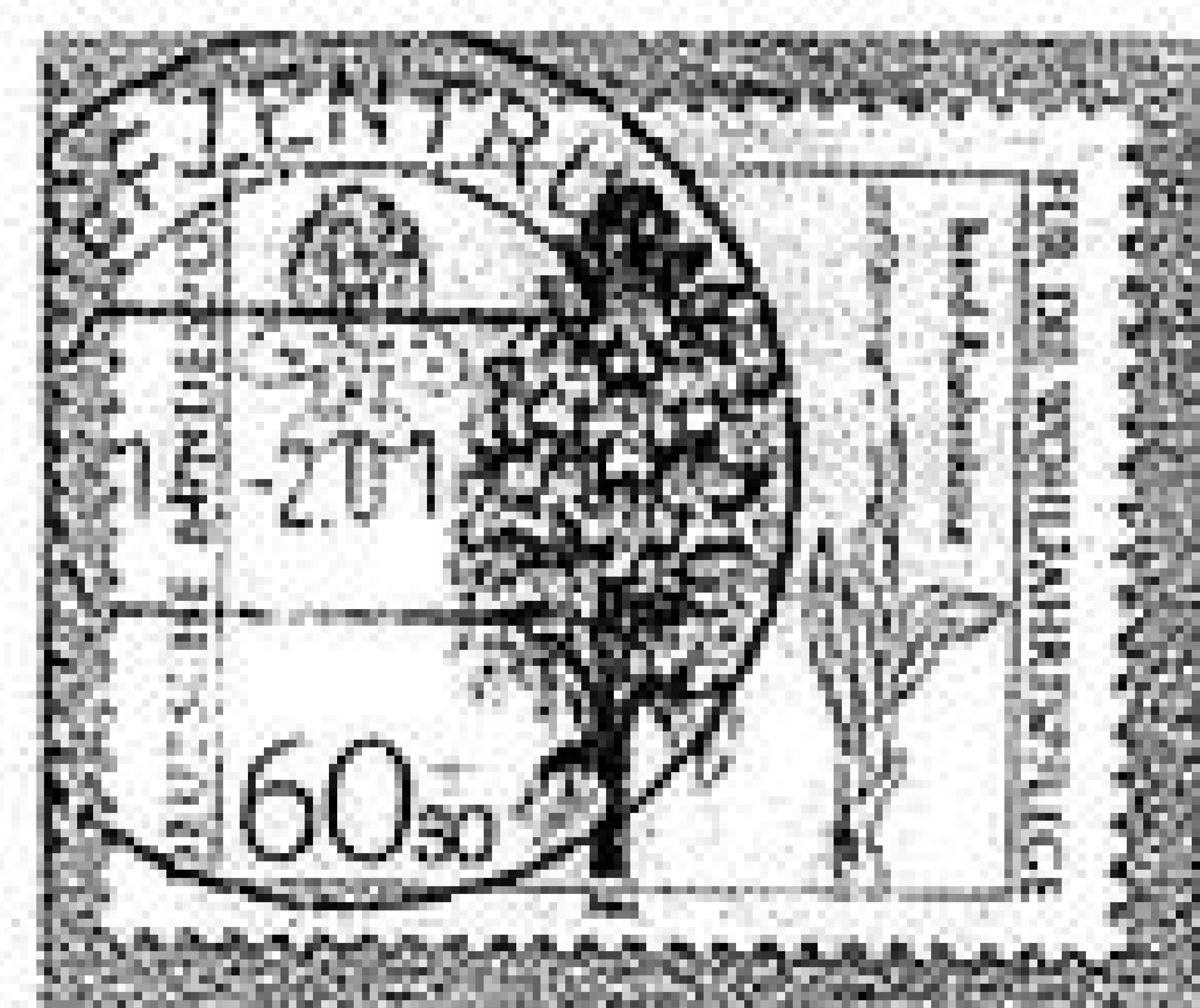
'I was most interested to read your piece about E.K.Balls. I had no idea that he was not a professional botanist. You mention his 1936 visit to Morocco and his seeing *Narcissus watieri*, but not his outstanding legacy to the world of daffodils - the collection of seed of what was later named *N. atlanticus*. He never saw it in flower, but fortunately the seed was sent to Sir Frederick Stern who eventually flowered it and generously distributed it. My father was one of the lucky ones. Mrs Gwendolyn Anley also had seed, and I was able to identify it for her when I was still a student. It was not seen flowering in the wild for another 55 years when Chris Lovell with Michael Salmon and Peter Bird located it. I think I was the sixth European to see it in the wild, but that was exciting enough!'

## Stamps

Thanks to Sally Walker for sending the set of four bulb stamps from the USA; these have no price marked on them, just 'First Class' - as Sally says, it means that the postal service can print them and decide what to charge for them later on. There is no identification either, so a guessing game. One is probably a *Cymbidium* orchid, another is a *Freesia* and the other two are almost certainly lilies, of which one is most likely the white trumpet *L. regale* and the other an orange one that I cannot determine - probably a hybrid.



Manfred Koenen sent us a very attractive one from Germany depicting the 'Brand-Knabenkraut', which I take to be *Orchis ustulata*.



In England it is the Burnt or Burnt-tip orchid, and *ustulata* means 'burned' or 'scorched', so the vernacular and Latin names are all similar. This is because the buds at the tip of the spike are a deep purple-brown, making it look as if the apex of the inflorescence has been scorched. On opening the flowers have a pale, spotted lip with two side lobes and a bifid central lobe, so is a little like a human figure (but not as extreme as the man orchid); the 'helmet' is deeper purple.

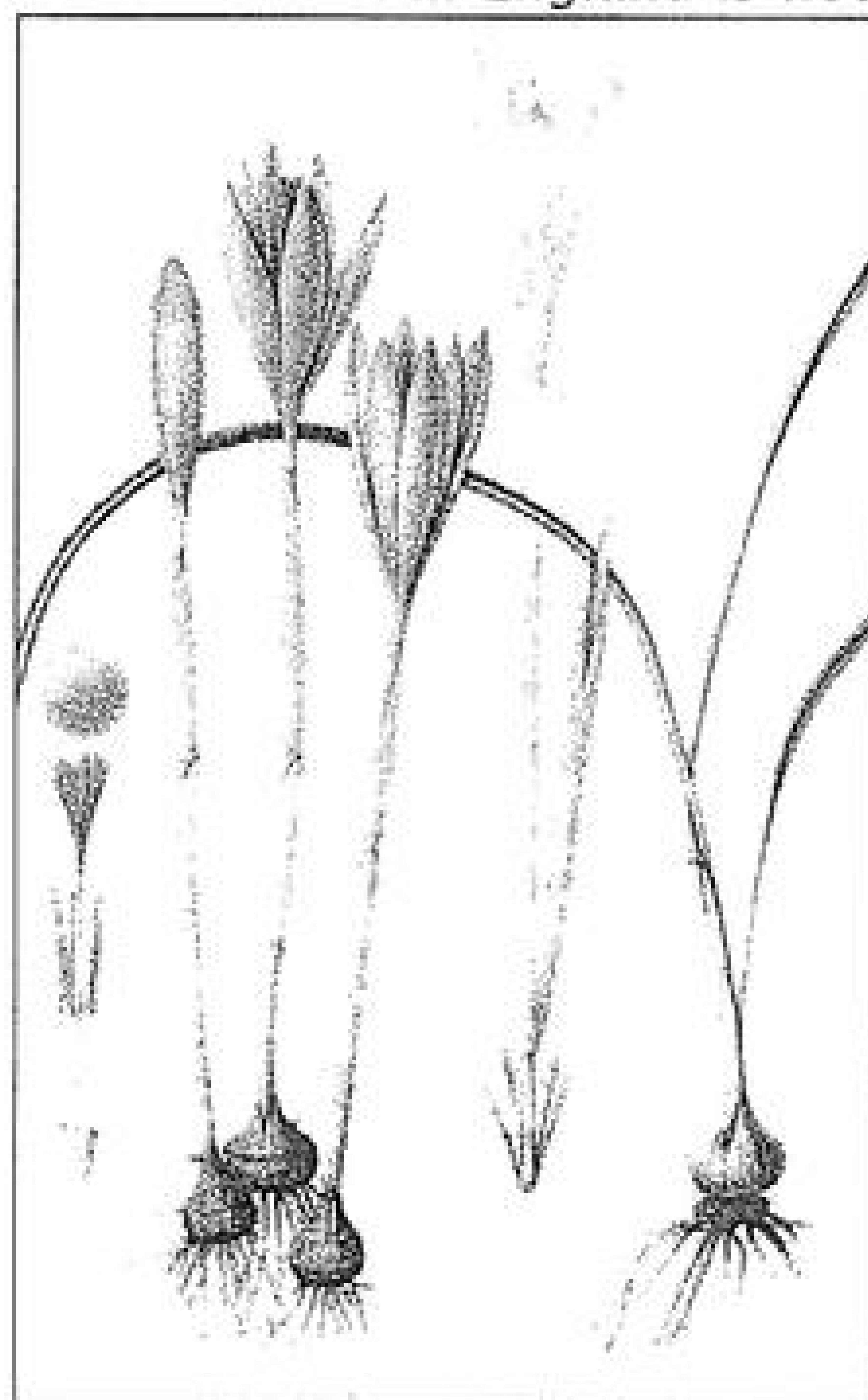
## The Halifax Crocus by Brian Halliwell

*Crocus nudiflorus* is well established in many locations throughout England, especially in the north. W.B.Crump and C.Crossland, writing in the *Flora of the Parish of Halifax* (1904) say that this is more numerous in Halifax than anywhere else in England, except perhaps southern Lancashire. This statement may well be the reason for the common name 'Halifax Crocus' that has been attached to the plant, and was in common usage in the north in the nineteenth century.

*Crocus nudiflorus* is not a British native but originates in southern France and northern Spain, especially in the Pyrenees in meadows up to about 2000m altitude. The date when it arrived in England is not known, but legend has it that it was brought back by returning crusaders. These were probably the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem who were hospitallers. A number of the locations in West Yorkshire where the plant occurs are close to hospices founded by this Order.

The first record of its cultivation that I can find is by John Gerard in his garden at Holborn (London) in 1596. He was growing it under the name *C. montanus* or mountain saffron. In 1629 John Parkinson was growing it at Long Acre as *Crocus pyrenaicus purpureus* or purple mountain crocus.

In medieval times the true saffron crocus, *C. sativus*, was much used in medicine, cooking and for colouring. However, *Crocus sativus* requires warm temperatures in summer to make commercial production worthwhile, so saffron cultivation was confined mainly to the southern half of Britain. *Crocus nudiflorus*, on the other hand, is tolerant of cooler, damper conditions and so was found to be more suitable for cultivation in more northern areas. The stigmas of this species can be used in the same way as those of *C. sativus*. Usefully, as well as being suited to cooler and damper summers, *C. nudiflorus* increases by means of stolons producing large colonies. In addition, whereas the true saffron crocus is a sterile plant, the Halifax crocus is fertile so it can also increase by seed.



*Crocus nudiflorus* (Maw, *Genus Crocus*, 1886)

### A very monocot-ish volume of Nov. Syst. Pl. Vasc.

Or, to give the journal its full title, *Novitates Systematicae Plantarum Vascularium* 31 (1998). Although dated two years ago, the BN team has only just come across this - we're slacking! Or maybe the date of the volume and the actual year of publication are not on the same wavelength - it does happen. Nevertheless, an interesting volume with a lot of 'bulb' news in it.

Dr. Helen Mordak from St Petersburg reports on new records for *Scilla gorganica* and *S. khorassanica* in Turkmenistan; they are described from Iran, but from the Kopet Dag that forms the boundary between Iran and Turkmenistan, so this occurrence in the latter is not all that surprising. She also records the predominantly Turkish *Galanthus rizehensis* for Georgia, near Krasnodar.

In the same volume, N. Agapova describes a new species of *Ornithogalum* from Armenia, *O. novaschirii*. This is compared with *O. gussonei* and *O. kochii*, so is one of the shorter species with slender leaves - no prizes for guessing that it has white flowers with a green stripe on the outside of the perianth segments!

There is also a revision of the species of *Ornithogalum* subgenus *Beryllis* in Azerbaijan. This is the group of tall species that have the flowers in an elongated raceme like the widespread Mediterranean *O. narbonense*. The species listed for the area are: *O. narbonense*, *O. ponticum*, *O. brachystachys*, *O. schelkownikowii* and *O. arcuatum*.

More interesting, perhaps, for most northern hemisphere bulb enthusiasts, is a paper on the genus *Fritillaria* in the Caucasus, also by Helen Mordak. She enumerates 10 species, provides a key to their identification plus bibliographic references, synonyms and their geographical distribution. The species are *F. latifolia* (= *F. esculenta*, *F. dzhabavae*), *F. collina* (= *F. lutea* Bieberstein, not of Miller, & *F. biebersteiniana*), *F. lagodechiana*, *F. orientalis* (*F. tenella*), *F. meleagroides*, *F. kurdica*, (= *F. grossheimiana*, *crassifolia* subsp. *kurdica*), *F. grandiflora* (= *F. kotschyana* subsp. *grandiflora*), *F. caucasica* (= *F. tulipifolia*), *F. armena* and *F. gibbosa*. The paper is in Russian.

The next volume of the *Novitates* (Vol. 32, pages 19-23) also contains some monocot interest. There is a conspectus (a synopsis) of the genus *Asphodeline* (*Liliaceae* or *Asphodelaceae*) in the Caucasus, again contributed by Helen Mordak. She recognises 5 species in the area (*A. lutea*, *A. prolifera*, *A. taurica*, *A. tenuiflora* and *A. tenuior*), and provides an identification key, references, etc.

There are also 'Notes on *Polygonatum* in the Caucasus' (on pages 23-26) by A. Jelenevsky and A. Zernov. These include a reappraisal of the status of *Polygonatum glaberrimum* from the rank of species to a subspecies of *P. odoratum*.

### ***A robust spring squill with a long history***

A recent conversation with Richard Nutt, following a visit he made to a garden with an impressive drift of a blue squill, led to some delving, to try to find the origin of the very vigorous version of *Scilla bifolia*, known as 'Praecox'. Richard had seen a good drift of it there in flower in February. Modern literature is not very helpful, although Grey's *Hardy Bulbs* gives the naming authority as (Willdenow) Baker. This indicated that it dated from the early 19th century. However, the most useful reference found was 'Sweet, BFG' - that is, Robert Sweet's *British Flower Garden*, plate 141 (1838). Sweet provides a watercolour (shown below) that looks remarkably like our plant, under the name *Scilla praecox*; in fact, he refers back to Willdenow's edition of Linnaeus' *Species Plantarum*, Vol. 2, Part 1 (1800) where the plant is also described but not illustrated.

The description provided by Sweet tallies very well with the plant as it is grown by a few people today - it is rather rare in cultivation now. Sweet mentions the wide leaves (up to 2 cm), the bright reddish stems and pedicels, and large flowers up to about 2 cm in diameter; the illustration shows the numerous flowers, also a feature of 'Praecox'. The plant in the drawing is fairly stocky, but it does elongate in the later stages of flowering. Sweet explains this, and the origin of the plant used for the plate: 'Our drawing of this beautiful little early flowering bulb was made from some fine specimens of it that were in flower in great perfection in March



last, in the fine collection of bulbs cultivated by A.H.Haworth Esq.; the figure was drawn rather too soon, as the raceme lengthened out considerably afterwards, and became more elegant..... This plant was first introduced, we believe, several years ago in the collection of the Apothecaries' Garden at Chelsea, but it has now disappeared from it for some time, and we do not know of any collection that it is in at present, except that of Mr Haworth.

*Scilla bifolia* is widespread in the wild and varies greatly in stature, flower size and number, flower colour and general vigour. 'Praecox' is a very superior form and appears to breed true, so it merits a distinguishing name.

### **Nothing much changes, does it?**

Whilst checking on the identity and name of the *Scilla* mentioned above on page 6, I came across an article on these vernal squills in a copy of the *Gardeners' Chronicle*, dated 1868.

"Some time since a question arose as to the correct nomenclature of these beautiful little vernal jewels, a question of some importance, not only botanically, but commercially. What's in a name when a thing is so beautiful? some may say, but if a customer orders one thing and is supplied with another, he is not likely to be well pleased; nor does the conscientious vendor at all like the idea of having his reputation for fair-dealing impugned; it may be very unjustly, because he may happen, quite innocently, to send out a plant under a wrong name. With a view to clear up the nomenclature of some of the.....[scillas, we looked into].....the question, what is *Scilla praecox*? If we turn to books we find a *Scilla praecox* of Willdenow and a *Scilla praecox* of Sweet. If we turn to trade catalogues and nursery gardens we find great confusion. One nurseryman supplies under the name *praecox*, *S. bifolia*, another *S. amoena*, another *S. sibirica*. One nurseryman says boldly I consider *praecox* to be a name only, it is useful for making up a collection of spring-flowering gems"!!

The author of this article, M.T.Masters, goes on to describe all the various forms of *S. bifolia* that were known at the time, including 'Praecox', which he regarded as differing in flowering a fortnight earlier (than the usual *S. bifolia* of the day), with larger flowers of a deeper blue. It was also known as *S. bifolia major*.

### **A new Chinese Tulip**

This may come as a bit of a surprise to those who think that tulips do not occur farther east than Central Asia - except, that is, for the little eastern Asiatic ones that are usually referred to as the genus *Amana* (*A. edulis*, *latifolia*, *erythronioides*, etc.). Maybe they are tulips - I expect DNA studies will say so, but they are recognisable as a distinct group. However, the new one described from western China (Xinjiang) looks like a proper tulip tulip, not an amana tulip! It is *T. tarbagataica*, described by D.Y.Tan, X.Weï in *Acta Phytotaxonomica Sinica* 38(3): 302-304 (2000). It is a small-flowered species with solitary yellow flowers flushed green or reddish on the outside, carried on a hairy stem and about 5 cm across when open. The whole plant is 10-15 cm in height at flowering time with three hairless leaves, the lowest of which is the broadest at 2-4 cm wide and 10-13 cm long. It was collected in flower in May at 1200-1600 m in Xinjiang province at Tacheng. The authors compare it with *T. altaica*, from which it is said



to differ in having a coriaceous (leathery) bulb tunic, a seed capsule that is oblong and 4-6 cm long by 2-3 cm wide with a prominent beak at the apex.

The same authors also describe a new variety of *Tulipa tianschanica* which they have named var. *sailimuensis* after the place it was found in Xinjiang province. This is a more robust variant, taller and with larger flowers 6-8 cm diameter.

### **And an old Turkish tulip**

That beautiful, very late-flowering *Tulipa* species, *T. sprengeri*, has always been a bit of an enigma. Firstly, it absolutely thrives in our damp English garden, seeding itself profusely and is long-lived, quite contrary to the behaviour of nearly all other species which like to be warm and dry in summer or they just disappear. Secondly, it flowers long after all the others are finished, usually into early summer (June, here), which is also a bit odd for a Turkish 'spring bulb'. Thirdly, it is a species that has 'vanished' from view in the wild - some claim it is extinct, but I am very sceptical of that assumption. Having done quite a bit of plant hunting in Turkey, I am only too well aware that many of the endemics are so local that it is very easy to miss them, unless you know the exact spot to look.

The trouble is, in the case of *Tulipa sprengeri*, no-one knows quite where to look, other than in central-northern Turkey in the region around Amasya. Which is why I am not very keen on the idea of 're-introducing' it (if it is, in fact, extinct) to the wild until it is known where it originally came from. This distinctive species was originally described in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* of 1894 by J.G.Baker of Kew (see Personalities BN 11:8) from plants supplied by the famous Naples nursery of Dammann & Co. who had received it from Turkey, "...from the province of Amasia..." The late-flowering was commented upon, although in the warm climate of Naples this was May 8. The following year, in Regel's *Gartenflora*, the species was illustrated (see below) and in the accompanying text it was stated that *T. sprengeri* had been sent to Dammann & Co. by Mühlendorff, a German gardener who lived in the Amasya region; once again, no locality was given. In the *Flora of Turkey* account of *Tulipa*, Wessel Marais pointed out that the same plant was named and described again, as *T. brachyanthera*, by Freyn in 1896, based on a collection by J.J.Manissadjian, but with no better information than just 'Amasya'. It has, as far as known, never been re-collected - hence the assumption that it has become extinct.

I have not yet made any serious attempt to locate the species in the wild, although perhaps one day.....! There are various clues that would help to narrow the search, such as the fact that it does very

well in our Surrey garden; this suggests that one should be looking for a situation in Turkey that is not too dry and sun-baked in summer. This species also has a bright green leaf (i.e. not covered with a waxy, grey layer), which is not undulate at the edges; this could mean that it may well grow in partial shade, as wavy grey leaves are a feature of species of tulip (and some other bulbs) that are growing in very exposed situations. It is also quite likely that *T. sprengeri* grows at a moderately high altitude, and is therefore used to a cool, climate, hence its lateness into flower.

Looking at a detailed map of the region there are various possibilities.

Of course, a short cut might be to just take along a photo and show the local villagers!



### *Another new Chinese lily*

In the *Journal of Wuhan Botanical Research* 18:115-116 (2000), J.L.Ma and Y.J.Li have named and described *Lilium floridum* from north-east China, Liaoning Province, on Fenghuang Mountain, 200-400 m. It is one of the orange-red lilies of the tiger lily group and is compared with *L. leichtlinii* var. *maximowiczii*; from this species it is said to differ in that its stems and pedicels are ridged and, together with the leaves, buds and bracts, are white-hairy; the perianth segments have scattered, convex, dark purple dots. The drawing shows no bulbils in the leaf axils, so that presumably distinguishes it from *L. lancifolium*, some variants of which do have white-hairy stems, bracts and pedicels. '*Floridum*' means 'with abundant flowers' and it appears that this can have as many as 20 per stem. Clearly this is similar and very closely allied to both these well-known species.

## RHS Awards to Bulbs during 2000

The following is a list of all those 'bulbous' plants that received awards at the RHS Shows in 2000. Fuller details of these (and of all the alpines & rock plants that gained awards) can be found in the *Bulletin of the Alpine Gardens Society* for December 2000, together with excellent colour photographs of many of them.

FCC = First Class Certificate; AM = Award of Merit; PC = Preliminary Commendation. (The grower/exhibitor is shown in brackets)

*Alstroemeria pallida* PC. (Dr & Mrs M. Sheader). Pale pink flowers with prominent purple spotting on the upper two segments which also have a yellow band across the mid-point. Chile.

*Alstroemeria pulchra* PC. (Dr & Mrs M. Sheader). Flowers whitish, suffused pinkish-purple; upper segments streaked and spotted dark purple and with a yellow and dark purple band at the apex. Chile.

*Corydalis haussknechtii* PC (Dr A. J. Leven) is one of the members of section *Corydalis* (*C. solida* & kin). This one has very pale pink or white flowers, tipped blackish on the inner petals; the dissected foliage is deep green. Turkey, Iraq & Iran.

*Corydalis macrocentra* PC (Dr T. Smale). One of the 'Leonticoides' group that needs alpine house or frame cultivation as it must be dried out in summer. Lovely blue-grey, much-dissected foliage and long-spurred yellow flowers; the tuber in this species can be divided when dormant as it produces separate crowns. Central Asia.

*Crocus cancellatus* subsp. *mazziaricus* PC (Dr A.J.Richards). The western variant of this widespread species, from Greece and western Turkey. Leafless at flowering time. Pale violet flowers, strongly veined darker violet; style orange, much-divided.

*Crocus pelistericus* PC (Mr A. Edwards). Probably the darkest purple crocus there is, akin to some of the intense shiny purple large Dutch *C. vernus* cultivars, but much more graceful. This is a wet-loving *Crocus* from alpine water meadows (having said that, mine rotted off during the winter so don't overdo it!). Like its close relative, *C. scardicus*, its leaves are narrow and wiry without a pale stripe along the centre. Northern Greece and adjacent FYR Macedonia.

*Crocus tommasinianus* 'Eric Smith' PC (Dr C. Jones). A white form of this delightful spring *Crocus*. Just as vigorous as all the other colours. Garden origin.

*Cypripedium kentuckiense* PC (Mr J. Moors). One of the larger of the North American lady's slippers which Phillip Cribb, in his monograph of the genus, records as being 40-71 cm tall. The solitary flowers have a cream to pale yellow very inflated pouch-like lip which can be 5-7 cm long; the sepals and petals are striped and mottled green and purple, the dorsal sepal arched forward over the lip. SE United States.

*Epipactis gigantea* 'Serpentine Night' AM (Tony Hall/RBG Kew). A variant of this vigorous, stoloniferous orchid with dark purple stems and broad, purple-flushed leaves up the stem; flowers greenish with purple veins and a yellow-and-orange lip. North America.

*Erythronium citrinum* AM (Drs I. & C. Bainbridge). It is hard to pick out which are the best of the erythroniums, but this is a charming one and very easy to grow. The leaves are as well marked as any, with brownish purple and green patterns, and the white flowers are suffused pale green on the outside, hence the name. California & S.Oregon.

*Erythronium multiscapoideum* PC (Prof & Mrs D. Rankin). Another very good white *Erythronium*, this one unusual among the western American species in that it increases by means of stolons. In our 'peat' bed it runs about and never makes a dense clump like *E. citrinum* & *E. californicum* 'White Beauty'; its flowers are very similar to theirs, but it is not so robust. The specific name was well chosen by Kellogg in 1855 for it appears to have more than one scape - in fact the flower stem branches below ground level creating this impression. California.

*Fritillaria pyrenaica* 'Bernard Tickner' FCC (Dr C. Lafong). A very good yellow form of this easy-to-please fritillary. Pyrenees.

*Fritillaria sibthorpiana* AM (Mr J. Almond). One of the best of the small yellow Turkish fritillaries, clear yellow conical bells on stems up to about 25 cm and a few green (i.e. not very grey) leaves. SW Turkey.

*Galanthus* 'Foxton' PC (Mr & Mrs R. Leeds). A later-flowering snowdrop with fairly narrow, slightly greyish leaves (applanate in vernalion); the flowers have a single green mark at the apex of the inner segments and long outer segments. Garden origin.

*Galanthus* 'Peg Sharples' PC (Dr R. Mackenzie). A good, quickly reproducing snowdrop, named by Richard Nutt; it has grey leaves, not very wide and slightly convolute in vernalion, and rather long flowers; there are two green marks on the inner segments, at the base and apex, and these almost meet in the centre. Garden origin.

*Galanthus* 'South Hayes' PC (Mr C.G. Mason). A very different-looking snowdrop in which the outer three segments curve outwards, have a notch at their tips and green markings (heart-shaped at the apex and a band running to the base); the inner segments are almost wholly green with a white margin. Originated in Primrose Warburg's garden.

*Galanthus* x *allenii* PC (Dr R. Mackenzie). A historic snowdrop, commemorating a famous name in British horticulture, James Allen (1831-1906). His *Galanthus* has broad leaves in dull green with a slight grey 'bloom'; the flowers are almond-scented.

*Heloniopsis kawanoi* PC (Mr D. Sampson). I like these little 'liliaceous' woodlanders and this alpine version is more compact than most. Tight tufts of small green leaves overtopped by dense heads of whitish-pink, bell-shaped flowers, flushed purple at the base. Japan.

*Hyacinthoides vicentina* 'Alba' PC (Tony Hall/RBG Kew). This is a superb little squill, or rather bluebell, for it has the generic characteristics of *Hyacinthoides* rather than *Scilla* (no doubt all will change when DNA gets looked at!); it has two bracts to each flower - a very easily seen character of the bluebells. This one is nicely compact (up to 15 cm) and has many starry, pure white flowers; equally easy to grow under glass or out in the sunny garden. Portugal.

*Iris narynensis* PC (Tony Hall/RBG Kew) A greyish-white 'Juno' with a dark purple mark in the centre of the falls and yellow crest; shiny green leaves, smartly edged with white. Central Asia.

*Narcissus jonquilla* var. *henriquesii* PC (Mr & Mrs J.I. Young). As with most daffodils and narcissi there are taxonomic problems with this. Suffice to say that what is around in cultivation as this is a superb plant, a small Jonquil about 20-25 cm tall with the usual yellow, small-cupped, long-tubed flowers with a powerful scent. This one does extremely well in a raised, gritty bed here in our Surrey garden - among the best of all *Narcissus* 'species'. Portugal.

*Narcissus* 'Sennocke' AM (Mr D. Sampson). A hybrid, thought to be between *N. triandrus* and *N. pallidiflorus*. About 25 cm in height with one or two pale sulphur-yellow flowers per stem; the trumpet has a suggestion of the shape of *N. triandrus*, but is stouter. Garden hybrid.

*Roscoea humeana* forma *lutea* PC (Tony Hall/RBG Kew). The yellow form of this superb *Roscoea*. China.

*Scoliopus hallii* PC (Tony Hall/RBG Kew). One of these 'fun' plants, not very showy but interesting. It is rhizomatous, with a pair of broad leaves at ground level and weird 3-petalled flowers. Unlike the better-known *S. bigelovii* this has plain (not blotched) green leaves and smaller, yellow-brown flowers. Oregon.

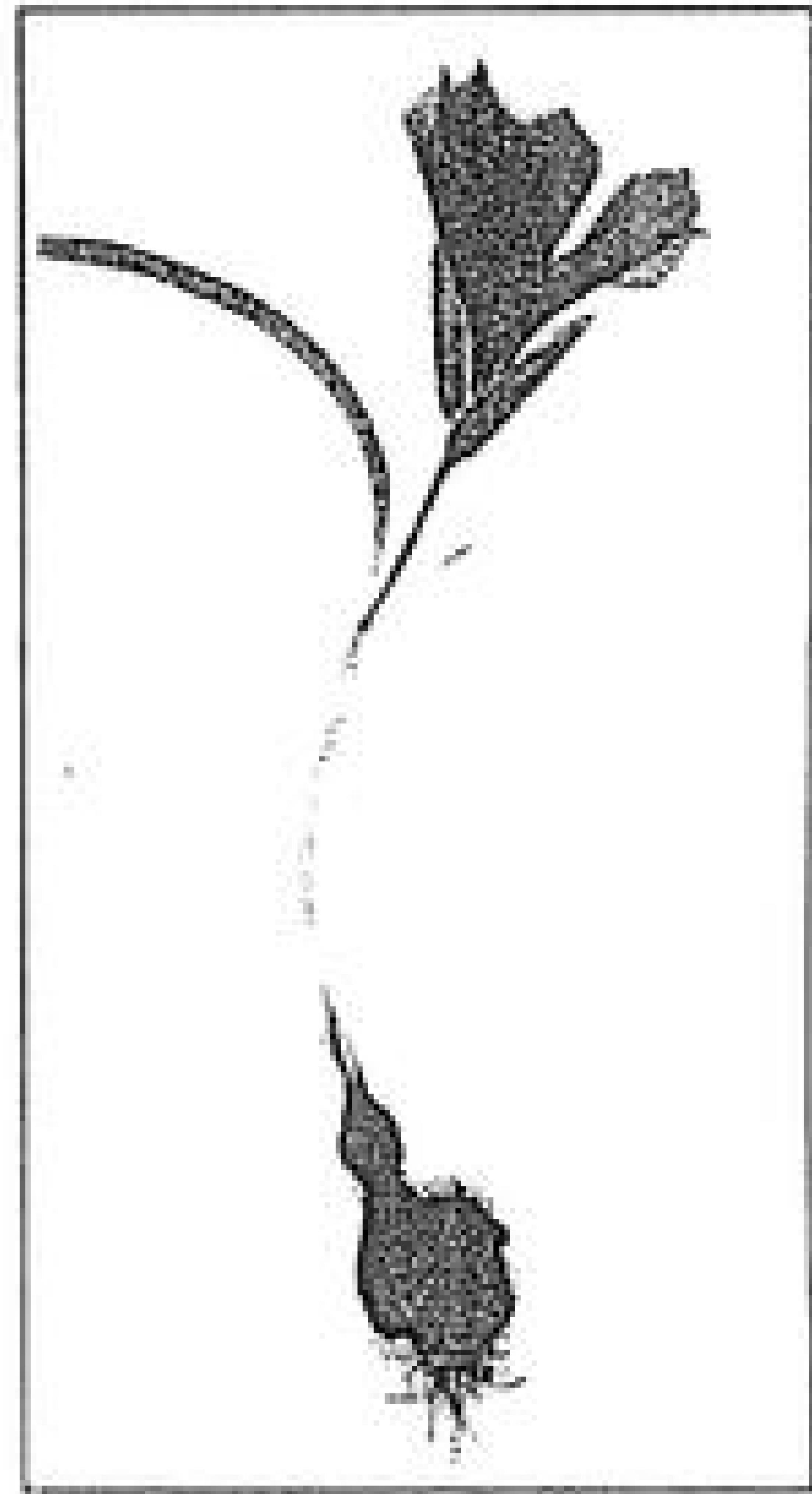
*Tropaeolum azureum* FCC (Mr & Mrs J.I. Young). A lovely dusky blue (but variable) climbing 'nasturtium', suitable for a not-too-cold glass house - the tubers of these tuberous species do not like being frozen. A delightful winter- to spring-flowering subject.

*Tulipa humilis* var. *pulchella* PC (Dr C. Lafong). A well-known small tulip with a big taxonomic problem. A very variable plant in the wild and all forms are good. The exhibited plant was the attractive white one with a violet eye in the centre, around under various names such as 'Albocaerulea Oculata'. Turkey & Iran.

*Weldenia candida* FCC (Tony Hall/RBG Kew). This is one of the few hardy members of the large and fascinating family *Commelinaceae*. It is a most attractive rosette-forming plant for the alpine house; large, white 3-petalled flowers with long tubes overtopping the lance-shaped leaves. This FCC plant had particularly large flowers & came from Mexico; the species also occurs in Guatemala.

### **The one-leaved *Romulea***

As a result of an enquiry from Trevor Jones, who is growing a South African *Romulea* with only one leaf per corm, the BN 'team' did a bit of investigating. Trevor had an idea that the plant had not yet been formally described and named, although it is 'around' as *R. unifolia*. However, the good news is that the *Romulea* specialist Miriam de Vos has the matter all under control and in fact dealt with it years ago, in 1987 in the *South African Journal of Botany* 53: 247-248. As can be seen from the crude photocopy of a specimen on the right, it is indeed one-leaved (a rather wide leaf for a romulea) and has a very large flower which is described as brick-red or shiny reddish-orange.



Inside the cup of the flower, each perianth segment has a dark brown-black blotch just below the mid-point and below that, at the base of the segment, a yellow zone - so, it is a very colourful and desirable species. The whole plant is less than 10 cm tall when in flower, most of the stem and leaf base being underground, but it will probably be rather taller in cultivation especially in Britain's poor (by comparison with South Africa) light intensity. Miriam de Vos compares it with *R. sabulosa*, *R. subfistulosa*, *R. monadelphae* and *R. vanzyliae* (all belong to the same section of the genus - *Spatalanthus*) but differs from all these in flower colour as well as the feature of a single leaf.

*Romulea unifolia* comes from Cape Province in the Great Roggeveld plateau region, the type specimen from Sutherland District collected by E.G.H. Oliver (No. 8933) on 5 September 1986. It was growing in open, level country among small shrubs in clay soil at 1231 m (4040 ft). It flowers in August-September, this corresponding approximately to February-March in the Northern Hemisphere. Trevor adds the good news that he has it growing well in his collection in Hertfordshire.

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### **A *Trillium* question from Kate Warren**

Kate has acquired '*Trillium californicum*' via a seedlist and asked us what it is likely to be. We haven't seen the plant but can provide an answer as to what it should be like. It was described by Dr Albert Kellogg (1813-1887), a pioneer in Californian botany, in the *Proceedings of the Californian Academy* Vol. 2, in a report of the meeting on May 7, 1860. There is a drawing of it and a fairly full description that reveals it to be a large-flowered white one of the *T. grandiflorum* type; in fact it looks like *T. ovatum* and has been treated as a synonym of this very widespread western North American species. How it came to be in a seedlist under this name is another question; maybe someone thinks that the Californian populations are different from those farther north (it extends north into Canada).

## A new look at Transcaucasian Colchicums

Eleonora Gabrielian, in *Botanika Chronica* 13 (2000), provides a very detailed study of the *Colchicum* species that occur in 'southern Transcaucasia' comprising Armenia and Nakhichevan. Seven species of 'true' *Colchicum* are recognised, excluding *Merendera*, the species of which are sometimes included in *Colchicum* [merenderas are very similar in overall appearance to the small spring-flowering colchicums but they lack a proper perianth tube, the six segments being free from each other or held loosely together by small hooks].

The species recognised are: Autumn-flowering - *C. speciosum* and *C. umbrosum*. Spring-flowering - *C. szovitsii*, *C. bifolium*, *C. ninae*, *C. goharae* and *C. zangezorum*.

The two autumnal ones (leafless at flowering time) are very easy to distinguish since their flowers are very different - large, pale to deep rosy-purple with equal perianth segments in *C. speciosum*, small (segments less than 3 cm long), white or very pale pink with unequal segments in *C. umbrosum*.

The five small spring-flowering species are more of a problem and are distinguished on a range of leaf and flower characters. In recent years the names *C. szovitsii* and *C. bifolium* have become quite familiar in cultivation; however, they are often regarded as being inseparable, with the latter treated as a synonym of the former. Here, Nora Gabrielian keeps them separate, *C. szovitsii* having a rather large corm with dark, leathery tunics, usually 3-4 broad leaves which are very obvious at flowering time, and not channelled in cross-section, and there are up to 8 flowers which are nearly always white; *C. bifolium* has smaller corms with thin, light brown tunics, usually 2 (rarely 3) narrower leaves which are channelled and poorly developed at flowering time, and the flowers are pink or purple. Both of these species have a wide distribution in the Transcaucasus, Turkey, Iraq and Iran.

The other three are less familiar and are species confined to Caucasia and Transcaucasia. *C. ninae*, like *C. szovitsii*, has a large corm and 3-4 broad, conspicuous leaves. It differs in having white flowers with a purple flush on the outside and the segments have thick, brown-purple veins. The leaves are larger too [very large for a spring-flowering species] - up to 40 cm long and 4 cm wide at maturity (to 25 x 3.5 cm in *C. szovitsii*). *C. goharae* and *C. zangezorum* are more like *C. bifolium* in having 2-3 poorly-developed, narrow leaves and small corms but differ from it by having blackish anthers (yellow in *C. bifolium*) and tough, leathery brown-black tunics; *C. goharae* has starry white flowers while those of *C. zangezorum* are funnel-shaped and pink. More distinguishing features are given in the identification key and there are drawings.

## *Ipheions and Nothoscordums, or whatever.....*

At a recent show in London of the Royal Horticultural Society, Tony Hall exhibited a bluish-violet *Ipheion* ('Jessie') which he had selected from seedlings of the paler blue 'Rolf Fiedler'. Now I don't wish to get involved in a debate as to whether *Ipheion uniflorum* is an *Ipheion*, *Tristagma*, *Nothoscordum*, *Leucocoryne*, *Beauverdia* or anything else. DNA studies might help with this group, or perhaps they will add to the puzzle; maybe it would be more practical to call them all alliums!

Another question is whether 'Rolf Fiedler' is a variant of *I. uniflorum*, or a separate species; if the latter view is taken, it is not easy to say what the differences are, although it does have the habit of running about by means of white stolons. It may be referable to a species described from Uruguay as *Tristagma (Ipheion) peregrinans* (it has stolons - hence peregrinating, or travelling); we reviewed this in BN 21:3-4 (1998). However, in the absence of any specimens of the latter to study, it is difficult to say whether it is the species to which 'Rolf Fiedler' belongs. One point about these plants in our garden, is that the old pale blue form of *I. uniflorum*, which has been around for a very long time, very rarely (if ever) sets any seeds whereas 'Rolf Fiedler' and the superb large, pure white form 'Alberto Castillo' are very fertile. I should mention, however, that the 'ordinary' *I. uniflorum*, for some reason never thrives and it has currently died out again, so it may be that it is just too stressed to produce seeds. 'Alberto Castillo', on the other hand, grows vigorously out in the open garden and sets seeds profusely. The various other colours - for example 'Wisley Blue' and 'Froyle Mill' - behave much the same way as the ordinary pale blue one and disappear; the pinkish 'Charlotte Bishop' has not yet been tried outside but grows well enough in the almost-frost-free glasshouse. It is in this glasshouse that all the others are grown. The little yellow, single-flowered ones *Ipheion (Nothoscordum) sellowianum* and *I. dialystemon* are brilliant early spring bulbs (very similar, differing mainly in whether the filaments (of the stamens) are joined at the base (*sellowianum*) or separate (*dialystemon*)); *I. hirtellum* has hairy flower stems and is usually a little taller, at least in cultivation. The almost stemless large white, funnel-shaped flowers of *I. sessile* (see BN 21:1-2) are a delight in the autumn-winter months, rather smart with a bold violet-green stripe up the outside of each perianth segment. The flower colour of *I. vittatum* (see BN 21:2-3) is the same, but the flowers smaller, more rounded goblet-shape, and they are carried individually on 4-6 cm stems. The dwarf species with small, starry yellow flowers in umbels are also good fun; we have *I. (Nothoscordum) ostenii*, *I. minarum* and *I. montevidense* which are similar to each other.

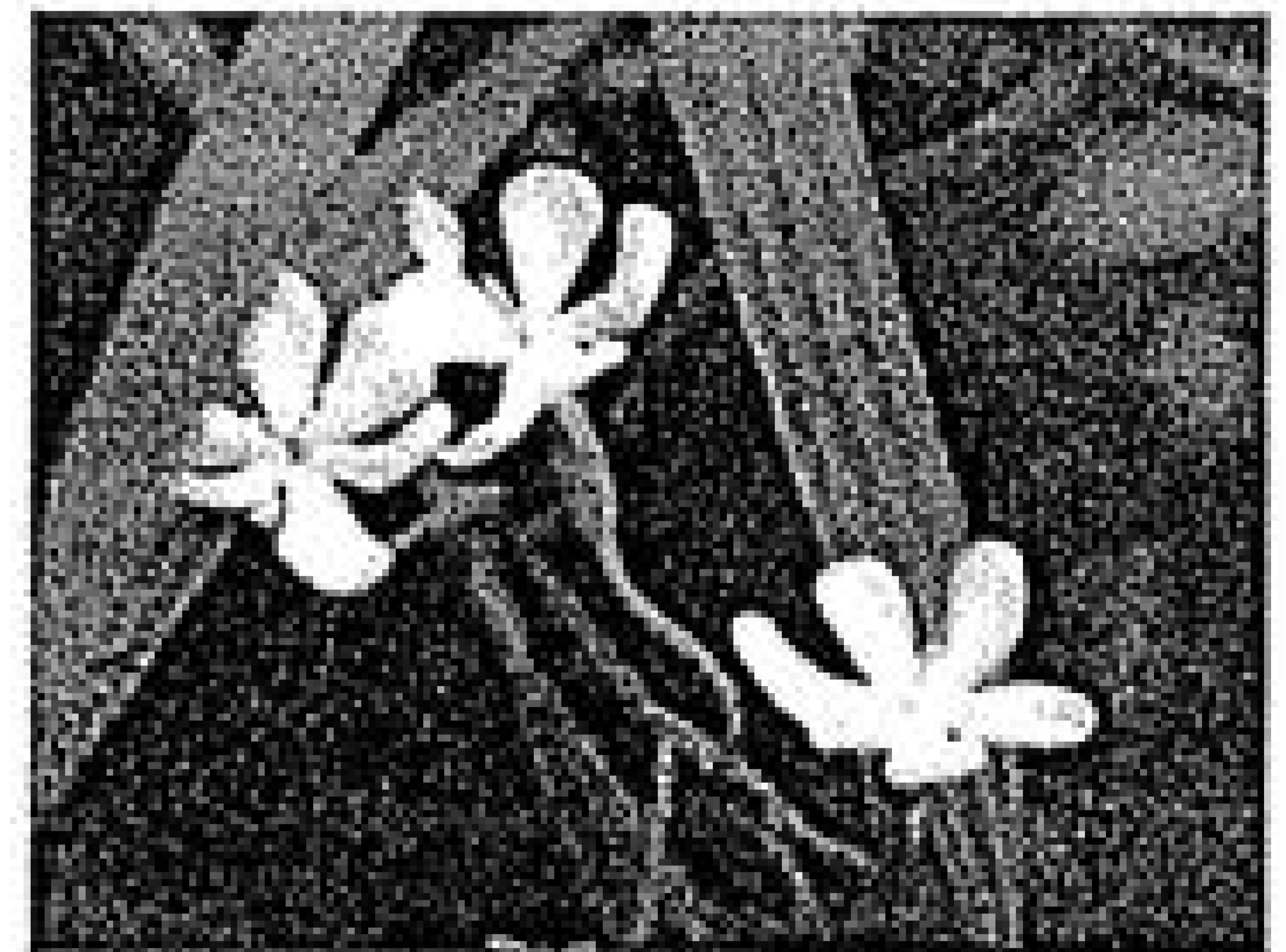
Thanks go to good friends in Argentina for sending us most of these.



### **A rather useful Irid?**

The BN Editor was browsing through some dried specimens of South American *Iridaceae* the other day, checking the identities (or trying to!) of some of those very difficult plicate-leaved ones of the *Tigridia-Cypella* groups. Their flimsy flowers curl up and look like boiled tissue paper a few hours after opening, so you can imagine what dried specimens look like. One sheet of the white-flowered *Eleutherine bulbosa* carried some interesting observations: 'Analgesic for body aches', with the instructions to make an ointment of the bulbs mixed with fat to rub on the affected area. A further suggestion was as a treatment for diarrhoea: 'crush the bulbs, boil and drink the liquid'. The deep purple-red bulbs are quite large for this group, something like 3-4 cm in diameter, so their size means that they have a reasonable yield if used for making a sort of soup. I would not, however, recommend trying it unless under strict supervision of the local shaman!

Is this usefulness the reason, I wonder, why this species is now to be found all around the tropics, not just in its native South America? It always seemed slightly odd that it had become so widespread, for it is not greatly attractive, nothing like as showy as the Mexican *Tigridia pavonia*, for example, which is also widely cultivated. The photograph on the right is taken from Clive Innes' *The World of Iridaceae* showing the pleated leaves and loosely-branched inflorescence, as well as the small white flowers. Unlike *Tigridia* and *Cypella* the 6 perianth segments are much more alike in size and shape, so it has less of the 'iris-shape' of flower. Unusually in this group of *Iridaceae*, the flowers are said to be fragrant but I cannot confirm or refute this - we did grow it at one time but as far as I remember no sniff test was carried out. Maybe some other BN subscribers might have information about this, and its efficacy in treating 'body aches'.



### **Stamp request**

Graham Simpson has been recording and collecting Cyclamen depicted on stamps for many years and has acquired quite a collection, but would like to track down any more. If any BN subscribers know of some, please let Graham know. Rather than sending them it is best, in the first instance, to write a note to him giving details of country, the species depicted and the currency value of the stamp - then he can check whether he already has it. G. Simpson, 13 Hurst Farm Rd, East Grinstead, W.Sussex RH19 4DQ, UK

## More about South African Snowdrops

In BN 33:8 (2001) we included an item about the use of 'snowdrop' in South Africa for *Leucojum* species. Wessel Marais, who kindly fed us the information, has followed this up with some comments on *Leucojum aestivum* which is growing in his garden in Cazillac, France (which is in the Dept. of Lot, not the adjacent Dordogne as we reported). Wessel writes: "Some 4 or 5 years ago I lifted a huge, overcrowded clump of *Leucojum aestivum* which I replanted after having pulled the bulbs apart. This year I notice that one of these which, by now, has formed a small clump, has slightly narrower, distinctly yellowish-green leaves which are noticeably (7-10 cm) longer than those of the other clumps which have the usual glaucous leaves. The flowers have paler and shorter yellowish-green spots and tiny aborted stamens. The plants don't look at all sick."

He adds that "here, *L. aestivum* flowers much earlier. In *Dwarf Bulbs* you give May. Here it flourishes in full, baking sun in soil which drains like a sieve - miles away from water."

The first comment is interesting, since it picks up a point about the leaves that we became aware of only in the last few years. We have, in our damp Surrey garden, a form of *L. aestivum*, which is a bit of a nuisance. It increases rapidly into huge clumps, producing very long, green leaves that flop all over the place and swamp other less vigorous plants; the flowers are attractive, as are all leucojums, but are quite small for the overall size of the plant. Some years ago we were visiting Joy and Jack Hulme a few miles away in Woking and saw in the garden a greatly superior form, with shorter, wider, glaucous (greyish-green) leaves and larger flowers. Generous as always, we duly received a clump from them and it has flourished in the garden here, and is far superior to our original - so much so that the latter is being banished to odd corners out of the way, or altogether out of the garden. Could it be that there are different forms or is it a virus that gets to them? Some daffodil varieties seem to have bright green leaves when you would expect them to have glaucous ones, and they are in the same family. *Narcissus* harbour many viruses (Alun Rees, in *Ornamental Bulbs, Corms and Tubers* lists 15!). However, this may not be the answer in Wessel's case since his leucojums look healthy; virus infections often show up in some unsightly way. Ideas welcome!

The flowering time is also interesting. I am quite sure that *L. aestivum* now flowers here weeks earlier than when I was working at Ingwersen's nursery in the late 1950s. May would have been about the time we went to see it flowering by a lake at nearby Gravetye Manor, huge plants 4 feet high, presumably where 'Gravetye Giant' originated. At present we have it (the "Summer Snowflake"! ) in flower, as I write, on 22 March.

## Catalogues

The arrival of Janis Ruksans' catalogue is always greatly anticipated, even if it is so enticing that one needs to consider a mortgage before ordering! It is difficult to know where to begin, and what to mention with so many items that are impossible to obtain elsewhere. Among the pages of alliums, I did notice *A. komarovii*, named after the man responsible for the monumental *Flora USSR*. This is described as having beautiful foliage resembling that of *A. karataviense* but with dense umbels of violet-purple flowers on 30-40 cm stems. And who could resist *A. jesdianum* 'Per Wendelbo', named after a great friend and very productive 'bulbous' botanist; Janis' adjective for the plant - 'fantastical' - is bound to be a good selling point! The purple flowers have white anthers and are carried in umbels 15-17 cm across, so it is a spectacular plant. The colchicums are interesting and it is possible that some of them need confirmation; Janis comments under his *C. szovitsii* 'Tivi' that it differs from other stocks in that the flowers are starry, so it is possible that it is one of those recognised by Eleonora Gabrielian (e.g. *C. goharae*) as a separate species (see this issue BN, page 14). The nursery has become renowned for its *Corydalis* collection and this list abounds with them; rarities such as the bright blue (usually) *C. fumariifolia* and *C. ornata*, yellow *C. schanginii* subsp. *ainii* (received an Award of Garden Merit for alpine house cultivation in the RHS Trial), creamy-pink *C. kusnetzovii* and a great range of *C. solida* colour forms. *Crocus* species and their selections are very well represented as usual, and there are some interesting-sounding *C. reticulatus* x *angustifolius* hybrids. Among the many *Fritillaria* species it is possible to find some very scarce ones: *F. olgae*, *F. dagana*, and *F. ussuriensis*, and the *Iris* (Juno) range is quite staggering: among others *I. inconspicua*, *I. maracandica*, *I. narbutii*, *I. narynensis* and *I. zenaidae* (mortgage essential!). The very rare *I. winkleri*, a relative of *I. kolpakowskiana*, is listed also. There are some good *Tulipa* species; interesting that they never seem to command the same sort of price at all as the fritillarias and irises. An extraordinary collection. Janis Ruksans, Bulb Nursery, Rozula, Cesu raj. LV-4150 Latvia. Tel: 371-41-32260 or 371-9-418-440.

Kath Dryden's Manavilins List No. 35, although much shorter than the above, makes up for it by including some real treasures. *Paris* is a genus that is growing in popularity as more of them leak out of China: *P. fargesii* and *P. vaniotii* appear, with the warning that *Paris* take a long time to settle after planting - I agree with that, they are not easy to get established. Several interesting, seldom catalogued lilies appear, such as *L. nanum* in various forms, *L. medeoloides* and

an aff. *medeoloides* which may be a hybrid with *L. distichum*. Of the countless *Oxalis*, I love *O. laciniata*, offered here as variable pinks-on-a-white-ground and dark blue on white background; there is also the lovely *laciniata* (? X *enneaphylla*) hybrid 'Gwen Macbride'. For woodland conditions there are few more delightful plants than the Solomon's seals and their relatives; Kath has several *Disporum* species including *D. lanuginosum* and the evergreen *Disporopsis pernyi* which seems to be tougher than expected; it has survived last winter unscathed. Mrs K.N.Dryden, 'Berries', 30 Sheering Lower Road, Sawbridgeworth, Herts. CM21 9LF, UK. Tel: 01279 722184; fax: 01279-723709.

Snowdrop time is almost over as I write, but ardent enthusiasts might just be in time for some of the specials listed in **John Morley and Matt Bishop's** specialist catalogue - the closing date for orders is 1st. May. There is an extraordinary array of cultivars listed and described here, well over 50 with a supplementary list of rarities that are restricted to one per person - such as 'Wendy's Gold' and 'Diggory'. The main list includes some of those mentioned on page 11 of this issue as having received awards at RHS Shows: 'Foxton', 'Peg Sharples' and x *allenii*. North Green Snowdrops, North Green Only, Stoven, Beccles, NR34 8DG, UK.

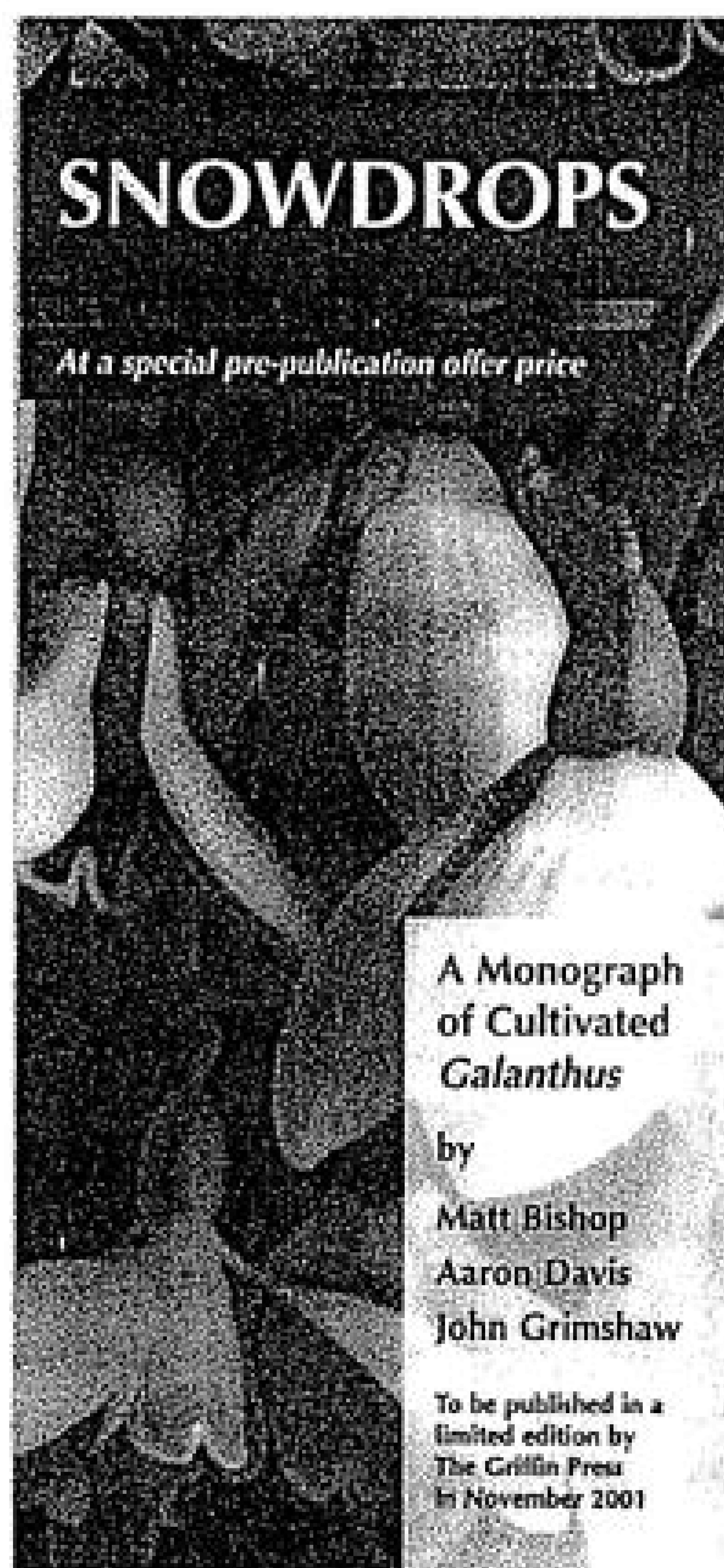
### **Bookends**

**Wildflowers of the Fairest Cape** by Peter Goldblatt & John Manning. ABC Press, Cape Town, South Africa [ISBN 0-620-24787-8]. £25.00. Available through Timber Press, 2-4 Station Road, Swavesey, Cambridge CB4 5QJ, UK or Haseltine Building, 133 2nd Ave., Suite 450, Portland, Oregon 97204.

Although this is a general flower guide to South Africa's Western Cape Province (i.e. the winter rainfall region), and is not restricted to bulbs, I feel justified in including it here since there are photographs of so many interesting monocots. Unfortunately, the printing of them is not especially good and many of them look rather dark or even drab. That aside, one has to marvel at photos showing, for example, sheets of satin red *Romulea sabulosa*, the bizarre flowers of *Ferraria divaricata*, a veritable field of *Brunsvigia bosmaniae* and the prostrate-leaved *Massonia depressa* and *Polyxena ensifolia* in their wild state. Altogether there are 649 plants illustrated in colour, 181 of them monocots - a small number of the total in this extraordinarily rich country, but nevertheless a very useful representation. The introductory chapters describe regions that are particularly interesting, while the main body of text provides a short description of each plant, the flowering time, habitat and area in which it occurs.

### **A new Snowdrop book**

Scheduled for publication in November, *Snowdrops* by Matt Bishop, Aaron Davis and John Grimshaw is a book 'written for gardeners', and giving 'the histories and descriptions of more than 450 cultivars', with extensive notes on the origins and affinities of each snowdrop. There will be a guide to identification using simple leaf and flower characters, a chapter on eminent 'galanthophiles', cultivation details and a section devoted to propagation by 'twin-scaling'. Close-up photographs of 150 clones will aid identification. There is a pre-publication offer at £37.95 until 31 May 2001; after this it will be £45 (postage & packing is extra at £4.25 in UK, £6 elsewhere) For an order form and further details contact: The Griffin Press, 35 Wessex Way, Cox Green, Maidenhead SL6 3BP, England [Snowdropbook@aol.com]



**Agaves, Yuccas and Related Plants - a Gardeners Guide** by Mary and Gary Irish. Timber Press (see first book reviewed for address). ISBN 0-88192-442-3. \$34.95, £25.00.

I know that these are not bulbs, and perhaps slightly outside the scope of the BN, but they are perfectly good monocots! It is also a most useful account of plants about which it is not easy to find good information. There are 100 very good colour photos showing these spikey plants in all their glory. As well as the two main genera *Agave* & *Yucca* there are 'species profiles' of *Beaucarnea*, *Beschorneria*, *Calibanus*, *Dasylyrion*, *Furcraea*, *Hesperaloe*, *Manfreda*, *Nolina* and *Polianthes*.

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