

# WILD EDENS



*Aloe dichotomum*

An exciting surprise landed on the doorstep this week - Chris's new tome - Wild Edens. It is a co-production with long-time friend Toby Musgrave. A lavish journey through the world's loveliest plants and plant places, it features nine of the most botanically rich places on Earth, including many of our garden favourites in a new light and also discusses the history of plant exploration, the impact of these plants on our gardens as well as the authors own personal (first hand) impressions and information on the climate and geography of each region selected. A photograph of *Tulipa praestans* that I took in Tajikistan in 2013 adorns the front cover. It was ambitious in its scope, after all plants from around the globe fill our gardens. Nonetheless, there are those exceptional places that contribute a great share of this bounty. We settled on: Mediterranean, North America (west and east coast), Chile, the Western Cape, Japan, China, Himalaya & Tien Shan, the Antipodes and the Pontic Alps (north-east Turkey & Caucasus). As often as possible it seeks to show plants in their native environments, something Chris is passionate about, adding that extra dimension to garden favourites we perhaps take for granted and perhaps know little about in terms of their origins. One part we particularly wanted to include was where to find these wonderful plants and at the end of each chapter we detail six hotspots, places that any plantsman should put on their list. It crosses the globe (more or less chronologically based on when most plants arrived from each region), working in more than a few of our personal favourite plant experiences; the monkey puzzle forests of Chile clothing the

slopes of snowy volcanic cones, quiver trees in South Africa, carpets of bulbs in Greece and Tajikistan, rhododendron in Sikkim, redwoods in California, Banksias in Oz, spectacular Fjordland dressed in celmisias in New Zealand, tulips in the Tien Shan, lilies in Japan and the mountains of western China gilded with blue poppies and countless primulas. One region we chose might surprise some; the Pontic Alps. But quite where



*Crocus korolkowii*

*Tulipa praestans* (left)



*Gentiana asclepiadea*

*Rhodophiala phycelloides*

our herbaceous borders would be without this (and the adjacent Caucasus) I don't know. A trip here in summer is to witness a gigantic meadowland brimming with diversity and colour. It is from this region that we get; *Alchemilla mollis*, *Campanula lactiflora*, *C. latifolia*, *Astrantia maxima*, *Eryngium giganteum* (Miss Wilmott's Ghost), *Helleborus orientalis*, *Psephellus hypoleucus*, *Centaurea macrocephala*, *Geranium psilostemon*, *Gentiana septemfida*, *Papaver pseudo-orientale*, *Scabiosa caucasica*, *Cephalaria gigantea* and add to this the many bulbs; *Scilla sibirica*, *Iris histroides* and *I. reticulata*, *Cyclamen coum*, *Galanthus*, *Colchicum speciosum* (forerunner of most of our erroneously named autumn crocuses) and lovely *Fritillaria michailowskyii*. Hard to ignore.

It is the ideal stocking filler! If you have a big enough stocking.

We have all just returned from a parched UK, bizarrely arriving back in a much greener Antalya. In this topsy turvy year there has been heavy rain a couple of times over the summer and we anticipate a stellar autumn bulb season. The main problem we have is where to go, as rain in the Atacama has us spanning the globe for flowers this autumn. Chris will be taking trips around Chile, covering the Atacama from low to very high, for first the

*Campanula lactiflora* (left)





*Crocus speciosus*



*Galanthus peshmenii*



*Rhodophiala rhodolirion*

*Biarum marmarisense*

flowering desert and then the high Atacama. Our first flowering desert trip is full so we have opened a second trip.

And Basak will be showing the delights of south-west Turkey. Even if you have been to the Peloponnese in southern Greece, you will find very little in common with the bulbs from there and what you see in south-west Turkey. This year might even work out so that queen of crocuses; *Crocus wattiorum* begins flowering earlier than usual (Nov-Dec). Expect to see half a dozen crocus, as many colchicum, three cyclamen, biarums, stjernbergias and gorgeous *Galanthus peshmenii*. The water is still warm enough for swimming and the crowds of summer have died down. The high pastures (or yaylas) are winding down at this time with few people and no livestock in the mountains, just as *Crocus mathewii* puts on a show with the autumnal colours of big maples (*Acer hyrcanum*) and steely-blue cedars as back drop. And there are some stand out historical sights woven into this which add a cultural angle, as *Colchicum baytopiorum* bursts from the crevices of huge hewn limestone blocks at Termessos or the muted spathes of *Biarum marmarisense* appear above ancient amphitheatre.

October is one of our favourite months in Turkey.



Myra (left)

