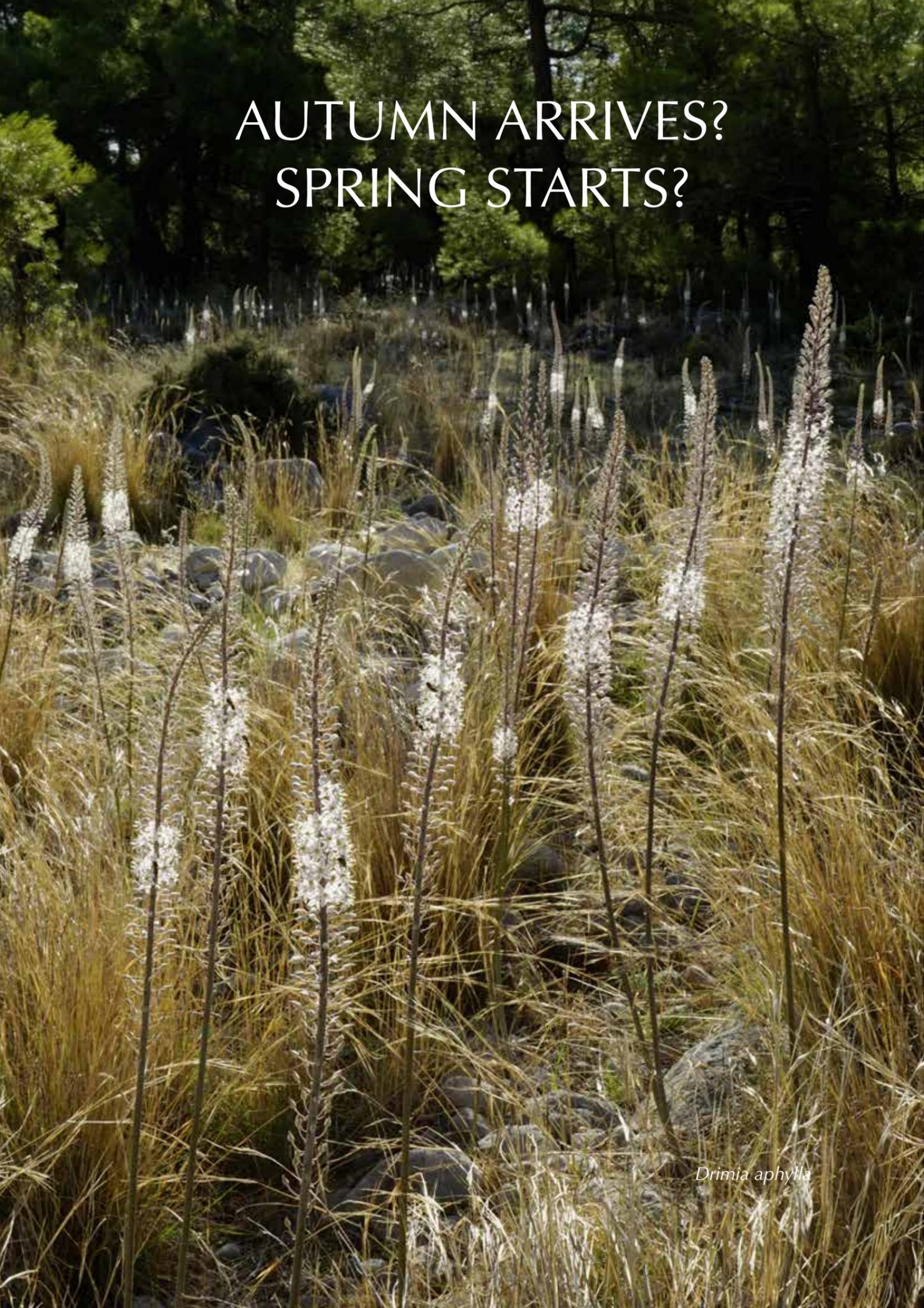


AUTUMN ARRIVES? SPRING STARTS?



Drimia aphylla



Drimia aphylla

Finally, the heat has begun to subside and among the crisped, coppery grasses there's a sudden rush of new life. Turkey's autumn Mediterranean flora is one of the richest in the region, perhaps only eclipsed by the wonderful Peloponnese of southern Greece. Both areas yield a similar number of species and also provide a similar blend of species, each with their own emphasis. But this is just the start, the species we feature here are the advance guard that always show, come rain or not. Countless spikes of *Drimia aphylla* appear in open areas, woodland edge and roadside just about everywhere, looking particularly striking among the dry grass or fronting the coast. I actually saw the first one in full flower exactly a month ago this year. It was formerly known as *Drimia* (or *Urginea*) *maritima*, but this all-encompassing species has now been broken up into several others scattered about the Mediterranean. The dense spikes of white flowers offer a rich source of late nectar and hum with honey bees.

Heading into the hills we have local populations of one of the most beautiful of all autumn flowers - *Colchicum variegatum*. This



Colchicum variegatum



Colchicum variegatum



Cedrus libanii and Lycian coast

large showy bulb appears on limestone rocks among the cedar forests above our home, (at around 1400 metres). Interestingly, we can find them here in late-September to early-October and a month later in lowland pine forests (on serpentine). The ones shown here we photographed more or less in view of the stunning Lycian coast, with its many bays and headlands, some of which harbour very localised endemic plants. Far more abundant are late-flowering Asteraceae, such as *Picnomon acarna*, the smallish pink flowers emerging from a golden haze of spines. In fact there is still very much a bristle of thistles at this time with the flash of golden *Carlina corymbosa*, stands of silver-grey of *Eryngium glomeratum* in the macchie or higher up on the pastures there is plenty of *Cirsium lappaceum* subsp. *anatolicum* too.



Carlina corymbosa



Picnomon acarna



Cirsium lappaceum



It is on the bays below that one of the emblems of the Mediterranean erupts from the sands at this time. *Pancratium maritimum* is found throughout the region, though our obsession with beaches and the sea has seriously reduced the places it can now grow. Thankfully, our local beach has a strong (and cared for) population that consistently gives a stunning late-summer show of extravagant white flowers. We can think of no better flower to usher in the start of the flowering season here in the eastern Mediterranean.

Whether it is autumn beginning or spring starting rather depends on how you see the Mediterranean season, where rain determines what happens more than temperature. There will be a geophyte in flower from now until July.

Pancratium maritimum