

# CANDY CRUSH



*Cyclamen alpinum*



*Cyclamen alpinum*

It was just about perfect up in the mountains this week, the odd cold day aside. The lowlands already have poppies in bloom and climbing up through the pines there were big clumps of *Iris unguicularis* and abundant *Euphorbia characias* with big maracas of greenish yellow. Reaching the cedars, it all became very sweet indeed, with a gorgeous candy frosting to the understorey, thanks to a fabulous display of *Cyclamen alpinum*. They (and the snowdrops to come) were the best I'd ever seen them, colouring the leaf litter and crowding rock crevices. Each little helicopter-whorl of a flower looked quite delicious gently backlit, revealing the dark spot at the base of the flowers. This was even more evident in the occasional white variants I found.

Reaching the open yayla I walked over to an area of cliffs passing coarse scree with some beautiful crystalline tufts of *Corydalis wendelboi* in perfect bloom, looking every bit as sugary as the cyclamen. There had been little snow this year and the season up here was well-advanced, with pretty yellow *Crocus danfordiae* scattered across the turf like tiny golden stars and the sky-blue of *Scilla bifolia* already in full flower.

However, I was here to see something else, *Galanthus elwesii* and they were in magnificent





*Corydalis wendelboi*



*Iris unguicularis*



*Scilla bifolia*

flower, coating the rocky slope in a pure white sugar-coat. Big clumps burst from the boulders and crowded just about every rock ledge I could see. The cliffs and bouldery slopes where they grew were still in shade and the flurry of snow from the previous day lay around them, cooling them further. I had no choice but to wait until the warmed up. This did at least give me time to hunt around for the best groups (hard to decide this year), ideally with the crisp line of the Taurus Mountains in the background. Eventually, I found a good clump and after half an hour rolling around in the dirt to reach near impossible angles as various thorns and shrub branches tried to maim me, I managed to achieve said photo. It is never apparent from photographs just what goes into creating them, but my boys were impressed by my collection of photo bruises, cuts and scrapes when I got home.

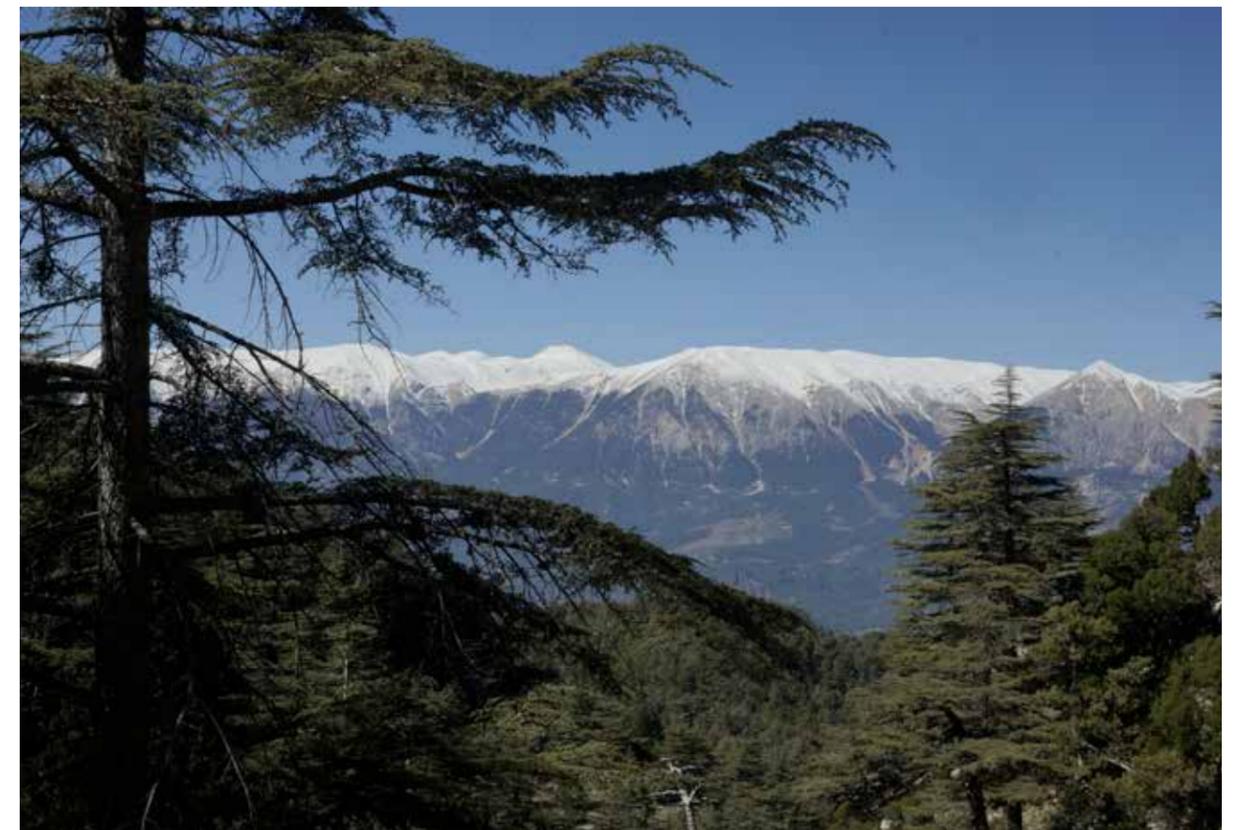
Descending the slopes there were more gorgeous drifts and clumps of snowdrops and then as I crossed the turf, I could see the first butterscotch *Romulea crocea* of the season opening. It was now gloriously sunny and warm and even though I wouldn't normally take landscape photos in the middle of the day the views of the Taurus were so crisp and sharp I couldn't resist a few snaps with cedar forest, blue, blue sky and a topping of fine icing sugar across the peaks. Life is sweet.



*Romulea crocea*



*Galanthus elwesii*



Cedars and Bey Daglari (Taurus Mountains)