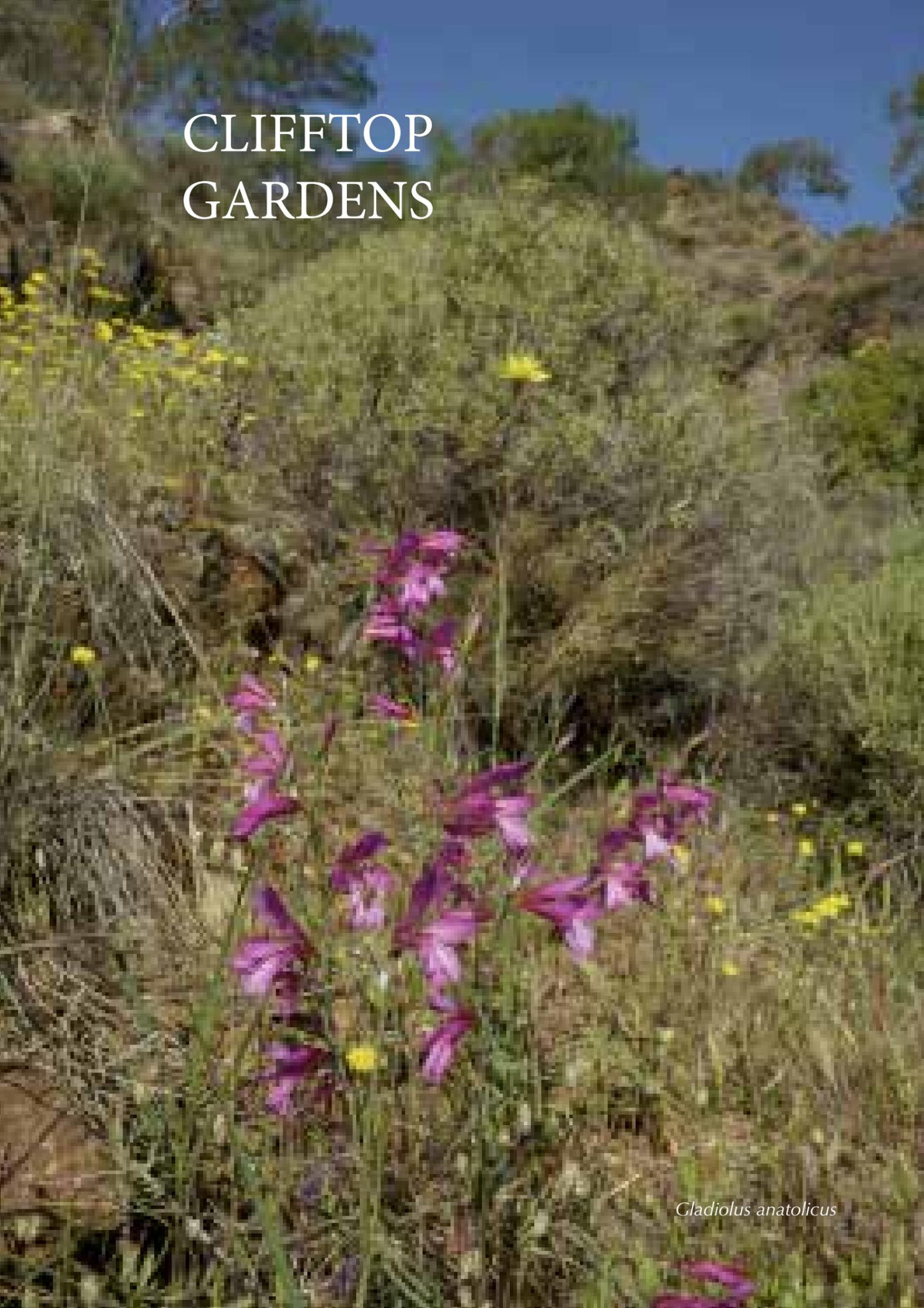


# CLIFFTOP GARDENS



*Gladiolus anatolicus*



*Steptoramphus tuberosus*

There are extensive areas of serpentine that punctuate the mainly limestone rocks along the SW Turkish coastline. In places they jut out into the Mediterranean Sea and create a series of headlands, some sufficiently isolated from one another to have evolved their own endemic plants. Serpentine is a tough rock and produces thin soils. It has many specialists that are confined to it, along with other plants that are simply able to grow on different substrates. For some it is more the fact these rocky clifftops are sunny, warm and the vegetation less dense than comparable macchie on limestone.

And these conditions produce some surprising and lovely floral displays. By mid-spring the serpentine macchie is in full flow and the weather is pleasantly warm, perfect for walking and enjoying flowers in their natural environment. However, to fully appreciate what there is on offer requires either a long visit or two visits: one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

In the morning the burnished brown rock is liberally dressed in a triumvirate of daisies with the golden buttons of *Crepis foetida*, denser tufts of related *C. commutata* and tall





*Artemisia squamata*



*Phlomis chimera*



*Allium junceum*



*Artemisia squamata*



*Tuberaria guttata*

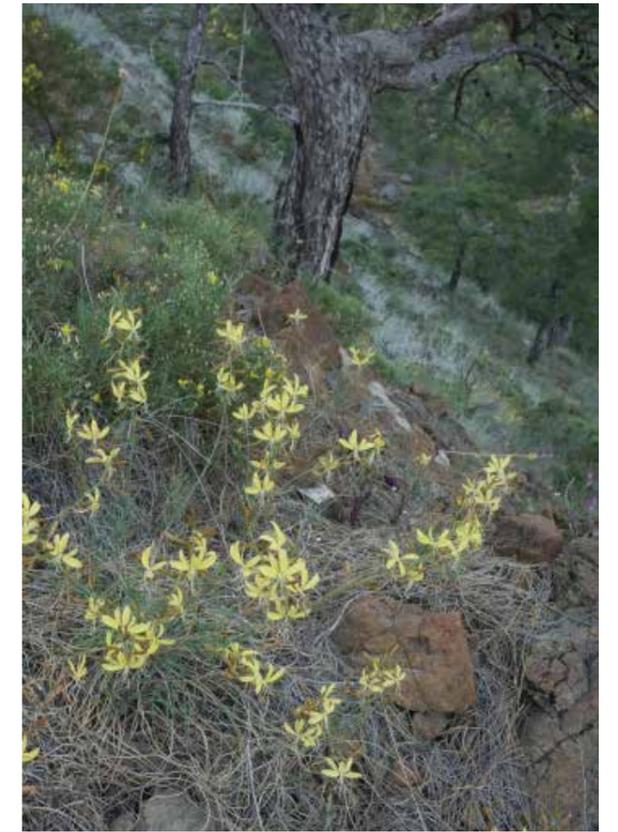
and slender *Scorzonera elata* topped by soft yellow. Occasionally they all blended with the pretty pink discs of *Convolvulus cantabricus*. As I climbed up the rugged trail this weekend, I also saw the first *Steptoramphus tuberosus* in flower, a simply gorgeous cream-yellow daisy with fine, scalloped, glaucous foliage.

Throughout there was an abundance of lurid pink *Gladiolus anatolicus*, springing from the trackside and just about every slope, mingling with the delightful ivory platters of *Artemisia squamata*, a delicate annual umbellifer. What is interesting is to see species that are commonly roadside plants growing in their true natural habitat - rocky sun-baked macchie. Spiny mounds of *Genista acanthoclada* were encrusted in bright yellow, here and there were maroon-eyed *Tuberaria guttata* and little purple drumsticks of *Allium junceum* sprung from every slope. Fragile drifts of the long-awned grass *Aegilops truncialis*, blended with the impossibly fine stems of *Stipa holoserica*, another grass that was nigh on impossible to photograph it is so fine.

Invariably alongside all of these lovelies were the slender branched stems of coppery budded *Asphodeline brevicaulis*. And here in lies the rub. Beauties such as *Steptoramphus tuberosus*, and *Scorzonera elata* are morning flowers, quickly

*Scorzonera elata*





*Asphodeline brevicaulis*



closing up around midday. *Asphodeline brevicaulis* enjoys a long lie-in and does not open until late afternoon. So, a return visit is required to enjoy these, but it is one that is well worthwhile. Suddenly, the true abundance of this plant is revealed, when countless (easily overlooked wiry stems) burst into flower, the coppery buds opening into soft yellow flowers, that are irresistible to bees and whole macchie ensemble hums to their busy nectaring. As the light softens and the sun dips below the ridge the ground beneath the twisted pines is a pastel painting of ochre rocks, the silvered bushes of *Inula heterolepis* and countless yellow 'butterflies' floating across the slopes, that tumbled down to the idyllic coves and bays of a placid Mediterranean Sea. I would have stayed until dark, but alas, we are still in days dictated by lockdowns and curfews and I either had to hightail it back by 7 pm or sleep on the beach and had I brought a sleeping bag, I know which would have won.