

# A FIELD GUIDE TO THE FLORA OF ARMENIA



*Iris iberica* subsp. *lycotis*



*Iris caucasica*

Since March this year we've been working with Tamar Galstyan to produce the first field guide to the flowers of this diverse and beautiful country. Tamar is passionate about her native country and the flora found there, which has driven her to compile and write this groundbreaking book. It seemed a great project to be involved in so we offered to design the book as well as help with the botany and photos where we could. Tamar should be congratulated for the way she had stuck with it all - especially this year when travel restrictions meant it was difficult to get out and acquire new images or find more species. It's not just pictures either, Tamar has worked tirelessly on writing 1100 botanical descriptions to accompany each plant. We know full well how much work a book entails.

Armenia is nestled between the Caucasus, Turkey and Iran, borrowing wonderful flowers from each as well as having its own endemics. Although it is a compact country it also has varied landscapes and a rich history. We've included some of the stand out plants here, though there are worthwhile species any time from March to August, since the mountains here soar to over 4090 metres (Mount Aragats) offering the chance



*Iris acutiloba* subsp. *lineolata*





*Consolida orientalis* and *Papaver commutatum*



*Iris imbricata*



*Dictamnus albus*



*Phlomoides laciniata*

to see gorgeous plants well into summer. Early on in the year and the woods are brimming with *Galanthus lagodechianus* with sheets of *Crocus biflorus* subsp. *adamii* fringing the snowmelt. The stunning *Fritillaria gibbosa* is also in flower at this time. Move on to late April and May and the incomparable oncocyclis irises are in flower. These charismatic flowers are very well represented in Armenia, it's a bit like visiting Turkey and Iran at once with the stunning *Iris iberica* subsp. *lycotis*, its cousins *I. iberica* and *I. iberica* subsp. *elegantissima* to start with. Then add to this the sumptuous purple of *Iris paradoxa*, finely marked *I. acutiloba* subsp. *lineolata* and the very similar *I. grosheimii* and you have six stunning reasons to visit. In addition, great stands of *I. imbricata* clothe rocky slopes and *I. caucasica* colours the higher passes. Closer to snowmelt are crowds of ice blue *Puschkinia scillioides*, dark blue *Scilla caucasica* and soft pink *Colchicum szovitsii*, whilst delicate *Corydalis persica* mingles with *Anemone caucasica* and *Ornithogalum sigmoideum*. Yet other passes are gilded with so many *Primula veris* and creamy *P. ruprechtii*, the latter I found with the beautiful chequered bells of *Fritillaria collina* near tufts of *Gentiana verna* and cliffs peppered with the lovely endemic *Viola somchetica*.

In the tracts of old growth oak woods, orchids



*Jurinella spectabilis*



*Viola somchetica*





*Tulipa sosnowski* (red) & *florenski* (yellow)

are plentiful with many monkey orchids and a tremendous variety of forms of *Orchis purpurea* subsp *caucasica*. Some of these closely approach the Iranian species *O. adenocheila* in colour.

Throughout the country there is fine church architecture and characteristic 'cross stones', the example here with the impressive *Phlomoidea laciniata* in front. Not far from this spot we found wonderful stands of *Dictamnus albus* on rocky slopes and then on another slope was the intense scarlet of *Phelypaea tournefortii*.

However, perhaps there is no flower more synonymous with red than the tulip. On one particular and memorable trip into the mountains not far from the Iranian border, Tamar showed me a stunning slope that was coloured from top to bottom with a dazzling mixture of both red *Tulipa sosnowski* and clear yellow *T. florenski*. Driving on we came upon a cliffs with a wonderful endemic thistle - *Jurinella spectabilis* to complete a great afternoon of flowers.

This is just a taster to what lies in store in Armenia and hopefully 'Field Guide to the Flora of Armenia' (ISBN 978-9939-0-3335-8) due to be published autumn 2020) will tempt you further to visit this intriguing land.



*Crocus biflorus* subsp. *adamii*



*Fritillaria collina*



*Orchis purpurea* subsp. *caucasica*