

PERFECT PEAS



Lathyrus belinensis



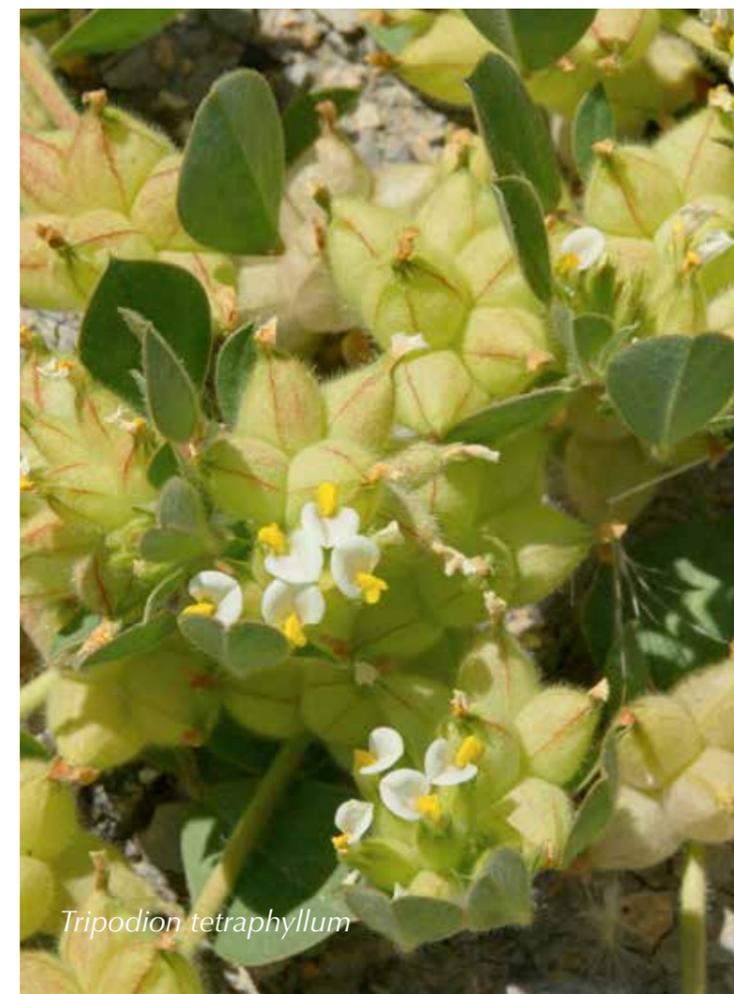
Lathyrus lycica subsp *phaselitanus*



Lathyrus stenophylla

The Mediterranean biome is exceptionally rich, it contains 12% of the world's plants in just 2% of its land area. Few families express this better than Fabaceae, the peas. There is a mind-boggling array of species, especially once spring really gets going. Our enduring favourite local gem is *Lathyrus belinensis*, a localised endemic that is found only on the Adrasan Peninsula. Sometimes it smothers banks with its joyful bicoloured flowers - but this can be an ephemeral treat. This year they began flowering in mid-March (much earlier than normal) and were alongside the elegant *L. stenophylla*. This fabulous group in the photo is from a previous year, where I could lay amongst the beauty. Sadly, it was strimmed for animal fodder two days later! What made this worse was they cut it far too early and was unable to set seed resulting in it never again reappearing.

It has a close cousin, *Lathyrus lycica* subsp *phaselitanus*, a beautiful colour form, which is even more localised, occurring only in and around the ancient Roman ruins of Phaselis, where it has to endure an annual bombardment of weedkiller, that eliminates a significant



Tripodion tetraphyllum



Securigera parviflora



Trifolium stellatum



Trifolium tomentosum



Glycirrhizopsis flavescens

percentage of the world population. For us, this very rare plant trumps the rather ramshackle ruins. Perhaps this year it will get a reprieve since the ruins are closed until summer? Being bicoloured seems to be a favourite of *Lathyrus*, and we've seen some stunners in Chile (e.g., *L. multiceps*) and California too (*L. littoralis*), though nothing to quite match our fiery local species.

Another scarce and local plant is *Glycirrhizopsis flavescens*, one of the most striking plants we find in our area and surely worthy of a place in gardens. These were on rubbly slopes with bright red *Tulipa orphanidea* near the beach in early April. Matching these on limestone is another of our favourites - *Erophaca baetica* (synonym *Astragalus lusitanicus*), also fairly localised, but common where it occurs sending up impressive ivory towers that produce big swollen seed pods.

Roadside verges are a riot of colour and the various peas get to show just how varied they are. Take the peculiar *Tripodion tetraphylla*, small-flowered it may be, but it is rather interesting when viewed close-up. More obvious are the swathes of pink and garish yellow *Securigera parviflora*, growing amidst a muddle of various clovers. The latter have some fun seed-capsules, such as fluffy *Trifolium tomentosum* or spiky *T. stellatum*. Scrambling over macchie shrubs are unkempt masses bicoloured *Vicia casia*, one of the many vetches.



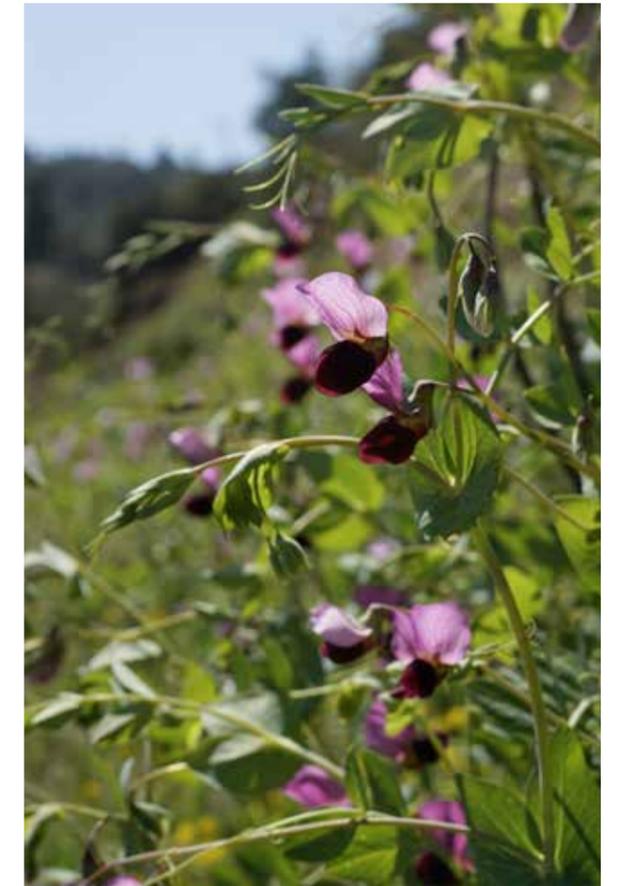
Erophaca baetica



Lupinus pilosus



Pisum fulvum



Pisum sativum

And let's not forget another showy gem, common though it may be, but *Pisum sativum* is not only the forerunner to the very peas with eat with our fish and chips, but a beautiful and elegant flower in its own right. These looked wonderful with the sun shining through them. They also have a gentler cousin *P. fulvum*, with pretty peach flowers which is found in the west of Lycia, and I photographed these last week just below the immense sarcophaguses at Simena, which were thronging with wonderful spikes of navy blue *Lupinus pilosus* and an array of early flowers. I've only mentioned the herbaceous peas here, but there are several woody species that dominate the macchie such as *Spartium junceum* and the all too spiny duo of *Genista acanthoclada* and *Calycotome villosa*.

It's safe to say that wherever and whenever you are in the Med, you are never far from a pea!



Vicia casia