

SHOOTIN' THE BREEZE



Briza maxima



Lagurus ovatus et al

Something a little different this week. It's not that there are now 'flowers' to be seen, on the contrary, the roadsides and macchie are awash with colour with carpets of *Securigera parviflora*, poppies, clovers and the violet stars of *Tragopogon porrifolius*. *Gladiolus anaticus* is popping out everywhere too, especially along the coast. And that is where I spent time this week, walking a beautiful stretch of the Lycian Way and enjoying the wonderful grasses that are in full swing now. Often ignored, they are nonetheless the crucial foil for many other plants and used well in gardens effective and striking plants. April has some of the best species in flowers, though I'll be honest photographing them is a different skill altogether. Their delicate nature means they catch the slightest breeze, though the gentle shimmering of a mass of *Briza maxima* is a delight. These were very common, peppering the rocky slopes and sometimes forming pretty clumps, perfect with the azure sea beyond. Sorry if the next bit gets a tad photo technical, but the issue with grasses is not only do they move, but one has to use a shallow depth of field to isolate them from their background.





Andropogon distachyos



Aegilops umbellata



Aegilops geniculata



Hordeum bulbosum



Pennisetum orientale

Whilst this gives speed, it means the slightest movement towards or away from the camera a focus is lost. Grasses on a windy day are a non-starter, so I always set out early if I plan to photograph them. This has the added benefit of finding them fresh as the oh-so-delicate anthers quickly spoil on a hot day. I found that out when I (fortunately) stopped for the reddish cigars of *Andropogon distachyos* on the way to the coast, managing to capture everything dangling and bristling as it should. By the time I returned in the afternoon, the anthers had withered.

Sandy flats had an abundance of rabbit tails - *Lagurus ovatus*, crowding open areas with a variety of other grasses, daisies and *Papaver arenarium*. One of their neighbours was the long awned *Aegilops geniculata*, one a number of similar striking species, which look fantastic en masse and little architectural marvels close up. Other grasses included the tall *Hordeum bulbosum*, positively fuzzy *Pennisetum orientale* and the bearded plumes of *Bromus hordaceus*. All too easily passed by, but when given some close-up treatment they reveal much more.

Of course, I was not ignoring the showier contingent to the day, it was just interesting to focus on something else. *Lavandula stoechas*



Aegilops geniculata



Gladiolus anatolicus



Fritillaria acmopetala



Carex flacca

was still flowering well, golden *Helichrysum stoechas* was in full bloom and quivering tufts of *Ricotia sinuata* dressed the rocks. And the cascading masses of *Lathyrus belinensis* were even better than a week ago. I had hoped for the clouds to roll in to get some diffuse shots, but often a photographer has to use what is in front of them at the time, a step to the right meant their fiery blooms were even more striking with some backlight.

I explored some other areas of pine and macchie as I returned home, finding a smattering of *Ophrys fuciflora*, and a good number of *Fritillaria acmopetala*, some of the big bells a wonderful coppery tint. They both grew with *Carex flacca* - a sedge, grass-like but in a different family, with quite different flower arrangement to grasses.

That's probably enough about long-leaved plants, similar ones are no doubt the bane of your gardens, but just sometimes they are worth a closer look before they go to the compost heap.



Ophrys fuciflora