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FLOWERS IN GREECE
AN OUTLINE OF THE FLORA

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THREE SHILLINGS & SIXPENCE

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bright violet stars, the latter pale violet with yellowish interior. *R. rollei* is lilac with violet lines and yellow interior, the flower about 2 cm. long, and is a seaside plant; while *R. columnae* has very small pale blue or whitish flowers with citron throat. All the *Romuleas* have linear foliage and prefer stony places, though I have seen *R. bulbocodium* growing in mud by a stream.

AMARYLLIS FAMILY

The Amaryllis family includes some well-known garden plants. The Summer Snowflake, *Leucojum aestivum*, occurs rarely in mainland Greece. I remember my horror at seeing a farmer ploughing up a whole field of them near Litchoron—a very good form, incidentally, with very marked green tips to the large flowers. The Autumn Snowflake, *L. autumnale*, is restricted to Crete and Cephalonia.

Snowdrops exist mainly at sub-alpine levels. *Galanthus nivalis*, the common species, just enters Thrace. The Corfu snowdrop, *G. corcyrensis*—often regarded as a sub-species of *nivalis*, also growing in Sicily—differs mainly in flowering early. It is supposed to flower in November but specimens collected on Mt. Pantokrater, Corfu, in April 1962 bloomed with me in late September. The leaves are just visible when the flowers, which have a deep green mark on the inner segments, appear. In this it differs from *G. nivalis* sub-species *reginae-olgae*, in which the leaves are seldom visible at the October flowering time. This fine snowdrop, named for the Queen of Greece, is found on the slopes of Mt. Taygetus in Sparta. A very similar plant, which has been named *G. rachelae*, occurs on Mt. Hymettus and, judging from a 1962 collection, on Mt. Parnassus. It appears to be only a geographical variant.

Other Greek snowdrops are *G. graecus*, from the extreme north-east and the Aegean islands, which flowers in January and is remarkable for the twisting of its narrow, glaucous leaves; the broad-leaved *G. elwesii*, from Samos; *G. elwesii maximus* from northern Greece, which has broad, twisted leaves; and the large *G. ikariae* sub-species *ikariae*, with broad, recurving leaves, from the island of Nikaria, south-west of Samos. The other sub-species is *latifolius*, from Asia Minor.

The fragrant *Narcissus tazetta* is apt to be offered to one for sale by small children, and when you ask them where it grows they say "Far away". It is in fact common enough at lower altitudes, and exists in two sub-species—*lacticolor*, which can grow to 50 cm., with up to 11 flowers with pale yellow perianth and golden corona; and *patulus*, restricted (according to HAYEK) to the mainland, carrying 3 to 5 smaller flowers with white, somewhat reflexed perianth. *N. papyraceus* is usually considered a form of *N. tazetta*. This pure white, multi-flowered narcissus is the original of our cultivated "Paper-whites".

N. poeticus may be found in the extreme north, but is usually seen, at sub-alpine levels (I have seen it at 5,000 feet in the Pindus), in the form *hellenicus*, which has a cup-shaped corona and sub-orbicular perianth segments.

N. serotinus is a tiny, fragrant autumn-flowering species which grows in arid places, often near the sea. It is usually 1-flowered, with white perianth and very small orange-yellow corona, the flower appearing before the leaves. This species, like *N. tazetta*, extends to Crete, and many of the islands.

The so-called Sea Daffodil or Sea Lily is closely related to *Narcissus*: this is of course *Pancratium maritimum*, which I have mentioned earlier. Its undistinguished leaves will be seen in sandy or stony places by the sea throughout the year and throughout Greece and its islands, to blossom in late summer with large white fragrant flowers, the perianth with its long filaments surrounding a large toothed, cup-shaped corona. It is easy enough to collect but is not at all hardy and needs a hot summer to ripen it.

Among the autumn flowers of Greece—as in other parts of the Mediterranean—the golden *Sternbergias* give a marvellous display. *S. lutea* is the best known, and a good garden plant, especially in the free-flowering form known by gardeners as *angustifolia*—the typical form has leaves up to 2 cm. across. The flowers are egg-shaped with rounded segments.

At this point there is some dissidence among the experts. HAYEK brings in a species called *S. sicula* with narrow leaves and smaller flowers with pointed, elliptic segments, and its form *graeca* with very narrow, pointed segments. Other authors refer rather vaguely to *graeca* as a variety of *S. lutea*, but its perianth segments are so distinctly different in shape to those of *S. lutea* that it clearly belongs to another species. I dug up *S. sicula graeca* on Corfu with *Galanthus corcyrensis*—its narrow, white-banded leaves are very similar—and it flowered here in September.

The other *Sternbergia* is *S. colchiciflora*, which has a wide Eurasian range. It has a very small, virtually sessile, citron yellow flower with extremely narrow segments—about 3 cm. long and 2 to 5 mm. across—which usually open in starry fashion before the leaves appear.

ORCHID FAMILY

Last of the fleshy-rooted plants are the orchids, which, though not usually the most spectacular of the Greek plants are perhaps the most exciting and interesting. There is a wealth of species, though their numbers must depend on one's attitude to the specific or sub-specific rank of the innumerable *Ophrys* variants. At any rate, there are at least 60 species, and one authority puts the number at around 100.

Before discussing the fascinating *Ophrys*, let us look at the other genera, which are botanically speaking rather better behaved. The Lady's Slipper, *Cypripedium calceolus*, starts the botanical order as is its due. This is very rare on the mainland at sub-alpine levels. So is the Vanilla Orchid of the Alps, *Nigritella nigra*.

Of the *Orchis* species some are familiar to British botanists; *O. maculata*, the Spotted Orchid, is represented by a local form, though its