

International Rock Gardener

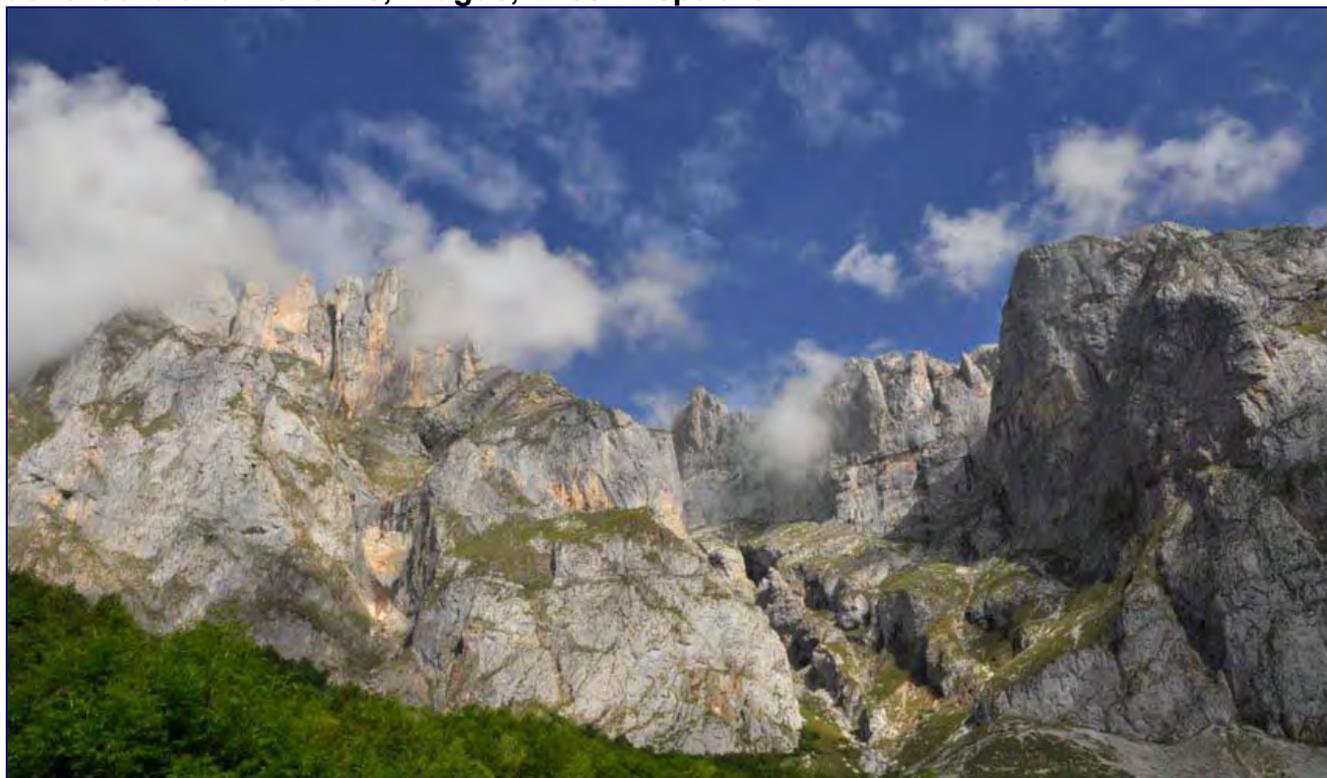




After some serious losses from last winter it is heartening to enjoy the gift of flowers as we experience a reasonable summer, in the UK at least. Spring flowers have performed remarkably well with at least some good seed formed and collected by those grateful gardeners who appreciate that bounty and its benefit to the various Seed Exchanges. As many summer plants offer to make a good harvest there can be no better activity for us all than to collect as much seed as we can for distribution to the Exchanges. The importance of this activity cannot be stressed enough: it takes pressure from wild populations and creates wonderful opportunities for every grower, whether beginner or veteran. Save and share your flower seed!

Cover picture: *Hypericum reptans* (page 19) photo by J.Ian Young

Flowers of Fuente Dé in Picos de Europa by Cedrik Haškovec, Štěpánka Haškovcová and McPavlis, Prague, Czech Republic



Dolomitic limestone peaks

Everybody knows about the Pyrenees, but there are also several other mountain ranges worth visiting in Spain. One of the nicest smaller ones is the Picos de Europa (Peaks of Europe), abbreviated to the Picos, in northern Spain. The origin for the name is that they were the first sight of Europe for ships coming from America. Another possibility for the derivation is that Zeus hid there the abducted Princess Europa, daughter of the Phoenician King, Agenor.



ED: The myth is that Zeus, assuming the form of a bull, spirited Europa away from Tyre to Crete on his back and there seduced her, so it is perhaps unlikely he may have hidden her in the Picos.

Princess Europa of course gave her name to Europe and the story of her abduction by Zeus is recorded at a Strasbourg building of the European Union Parliament, in a sculpture by the brothers Nikos and Pandelis Soliriades, gifted from Crete. (far left)



Left: Europa and Zeus depicted on a two Euro coin.

---International Rock Gardener---

The Picos de Europa is a range of mountains 20 km inland from the northern coast of Spain. The highest peaks of the Picos reach over 2500 m. The Asturian area of the Picos was the first national park in Spain in 1918 and now the whole area of the Picos is a [UNESCO](#) biosphere reserve. This mainly calcareous massif is reminiscent of the Italian Dolomites. The dolomite limestone bedrock offers a very rich flora with plenty of endemics.



The best alpine plant grows here: *Gentiana angustifolia* subsp. *corbariensis* (synonym *G. occidentalis*) (above).

Its big blue “trumpets” are very similar to *G. acaulis* known from the Alps.

We also found *Gentiana verna* with atypical white stripes in their flowers. (right)

A very popular area there is the Fuente Dé with rock pastures at an altitude of 1900 m (above). This paradise in the middle of the massif can be easily reached by a cable car. These pastures are natural botanical gardens, full of fine spring flowers when we were there in the second half of May.





Gentiana angustifolia subsp. *corbariensis*

In the vegetation between stones we could also see white *Ranunculus amplexicaulis*, and a yellow *R. gramineus* with tiny *Scilla verna*. To our surprise we could also see *Hepatica nobilis*, which is quite common in our (Czech) country, but there it is found in lowland forests. We, as photographers, appreciate the ability to publish our pictures in the electronic field of IRG, because the amount of our illustrations is not so limited as in a classic bulletin and the quality of reproduction has highest possible standard.

---International Rock Gardener---

It was a great pleasure for us to find on one rock outcrop the very neat and rare yellow *Saxifraga felineri* (right).

It is a prettier kabschia type than its Pyrenean cousin *Saxifraga aretioides*.

On the same rock we found low forms of *Narcissus asturiensis*.

[Ed: *Saxifraga felineri* P.VARGAS 1997 is an unresolved name, according to the Kew PlantList.]

Scattered between stones or on rocks in crevices were compact mats of *Lithodora diffusa* with bright blue flowers.

The experienced Scottish plantsman, Ron Mc Beath, has introduced from Fuente Dé a hardy compact cultivar of this, named *L. diffusa* 'Picos'.



Lithodora diffusa

---International Rock Gardener---

Another saxicole plant tucked in the crevices is *Matthiola fruticulosa* subsp. *perennis* which is quite dwarf.



Thymelaea coridifolia subsp. *dendrobryum*

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The dwarf *Daphne laureola* subsp. *philippi* shows, at alpine levels, different shades of lemon green yellow flowers and nice foliage. A nearly unknown relative of the Daphne is the small plant *Thymelaea coridifolia* subsp. *dendrobryum*. We found two *Linaria* species in large screes: the pale pink was *Linaria alpina* subsp. *filicaulis*, which is endemic to the north-western Spain and has much lighter pink flowers than the species in the Alps. Another *Linaria* was yellow; this was most likely *L. supina*.



In the fields, near the lower station of the cable car, or near the road going to Fuente Dé, we found several terrestrial orchids like *Orchis ustulata*, *O. papilionacea* var. *grandiflora*, *O. provincialis*, *O. mascula*, *Serapias lingua*, *Ophrys apifera* and the Lizard orchid *Himantoglossum hircinum*. Nevertheless the best period to see orchids in the Picos de Europa is June. We have described just one valley but there are several other places in Picos, like Puerto de San Glorio, also with a rich flora. C & S H

ED: Some wonderful orchids were found in late May 2011 by some SRGC Forumists [visiting the Picos](#), such as this Lizard Orchid, *Himantoglossum hircinum*, photo by Cliff Booker and this *Serapias lingua*, photo by John E. Dower.



Above: Orchid meadow in the Picos, photo John E Dower. ED: John and Clare Dower, well-known for their prize-winning miniature garden exhibits, are members of the East Lancashire Group, as is Cliff Booker. This is one of the most active AGS Groups, many of whose members are SRGC members/

---International Rock Gardener---

forumists, who are [involved in many projects](#), such as the making of an alpine garden at the Ramsbottom Civic Hall in Bury, where their meetings are held.

---Plant Portrait---

Campanula formanekiana DEGEN & DORFLER by Zdeněk Zvolánek



There is a Macedonian bellflower in the Balkan Peninsula, which for two years sports very decorative silver-grey leaf rosettes. The following year a great explosion of bloom occurs ending with a gracious death after setting many seeds. It is a monocarpic species named in honour of the Moravian Professor Eduard Formanek (1845-1900) [author](#) of "Flora des Balkans".



Postage stamps from Macedonia and Yugoslavia

I saw its white variety in a lecture by the late Lionel Bacon. After reading the AGS Bulletin about the Macedonian Expedition I was prepared to try it in our hot and dry continental rock garden in the Czech Republic.

I visited Mt. Vermion in NE Greece with my only team member, driver, cook and plant spotter Joyce Carruthers, on the way to Eastern Turkey about 9 years ago. After refreshing ourselves with a bottle of local red wine we set off to look for *Lilium martagon* (which flowers in the spring) of the same colour as the wine in a deciduous forest behind a tall and isolated limestone outcrop. The hot, dry rock was about 1600 m above sea level and there we discovered the dried up campanula with some seed.

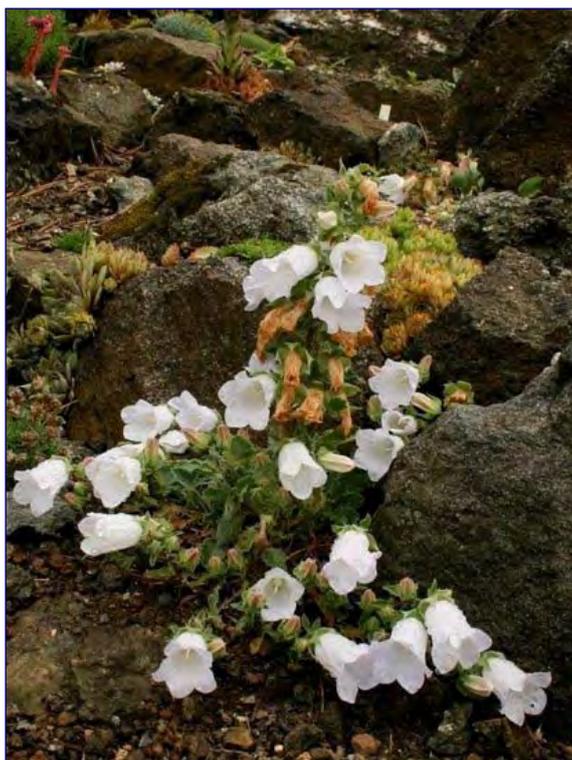


Left and below: *Campanula formanekiana* photos by ZZ



---International Rock Gardener---

Two years after planting some seedlings we were rewarded by the astonishingly beautiful pyramidal inflorescences covered with large pale blue blossoms. The plants ranged between 20–30cm in height; some flowers were paler and some darker but none had white bells. In its natural habitat this species prefers an eastern exposure so our plants were placed in crevices with some shelter against scorching sun. Our first seed crop was distributed to strategically important places in the rock garden and plenty of pretty rosettes appeared over the following years. We have enjoyed great displays of pale blue colour above our mildly alkaline igneous rock outcrops and have distributed the seed of this relatively unknown campanula to friends. I just cast the seed around where I would like to see these lovely plants. It is important to note that the seeds germinate uncovered, needing the light. The first part of this optimistic article was written three years ago and edited by the late Joyce Carruthers for the [BNARGS](#) Newsletter.



Campanula formanekiana forma *albiflora* by ZZ

In autumn 2009 I bought, from a good Dutch nurseryman, the white form of *C. formanekiana* and planted it into the crevice garden. Last year, when we spent the end of spring and summer in North America, a friend of ours collected seeds of this Formánék's bellflower for himself but nobody propagated it. Fortunately at present I have seven pale blue plants and one white (which is later blooming) in full flower. The white is not snow white but it is very pretty with shy pale rose cheeks. The bells are 40 mm long and 35 mm broad. Plant is 30 cm tall and 35 cm across at the base.

The biggest plant is between tufa stones in Joyce's big ceramic pot (below) and it is a shame that she is not here to enjoy her plant.



ED: Stewart Mitchell in the Journal of the SRGC for April 1957 in the first part of his articles Campanulas in the Rock Garden, wrote of *C. formanekiana* :

".....before coming to the true perennials, there are a number of monocarpic species. As with biennials, a basal rosette is formed in their first year with production of flowers is deferred until a later season, which may be the following one, or additional rosettes may be formed instead.

C. formanekiana is a delightful representative of this class. It grows in rocky places in nature and I find a wall an ideal place for it, with its long root into good soil. Its rosettes are attractive themselves, being grey and crinkled and of regular shape. From these rise sturdy stems...carrying Canterbury bell flowers in the leaf axils.

The flowers are generally a good solid white but pink and blue tints are said to occur."

---International Rock Gardener---

“A well developed plant will produce side flowering stems, making a pyramid of bloom. It is good for pot culture in a deep pot, potting on to a final pot of considerable size if the plant is well grown. Seed provides the only means of increase, although this year a rosette formed on one of my plants has survived while the rest of the plant is dead.” This habit has been noted more recently by several growers.



Above: *C. formanekiana* colonising a wall and a close up of a pot grown plant. Photos by Mike Ireland.

---Gardens in the Mountains---

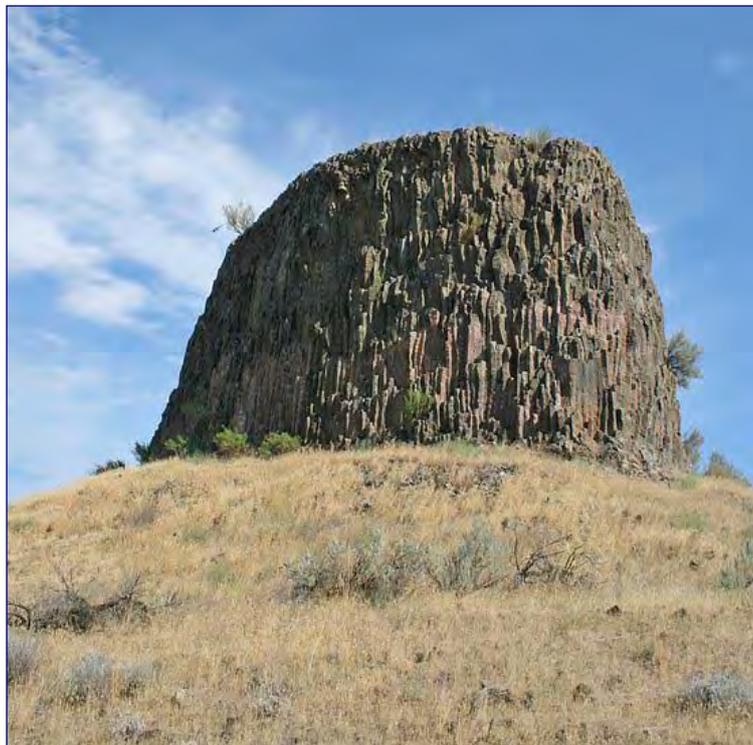
Memories are made of this.....

Text and photos ZZ

Scanned slides tend to be dull spots in every computer but in our heads the memories ignited by old pictures are forever bright even though they are usually connected with our dead compadres or garden friends.

Hat Rock, Oregon

Eriogonum sphaerocephalum



Our sacred places and admired plants should be shared and filed in an electronic journal. I offer for the taste of readers pictures from Western Oregon, namely the Cascades, where the influence of the Pacific Ocean makes plants pampered by their optimal living conditions. These spoiled American children are not able to stand the dry, alkaline and hot diet in my lowland garden, so I leave them to be cherished in the UK or in the lap of men like Rick Lupp.

---International Rock Gardener---

Just northwards of this area, with divine moisture, is a fine steppe area by the riverside of the Columbia River, where there are some plants which might live in my garden. You can recognise this dry country by Hat Rocks, the columns where basalt lava has cooled into vertical layers resembling crevice gardens. The picture of Hat Rock is a natural design of outcrop with good access from short turf and all possible aspects for the comfort of the plants. The goodwill of dwarf shrubs to grow abroad is manifested by the happiness of the local *Eriogonum sphaerocephalum* which has immigrated successfully to my dry garden for a seven year long trial. Phloxes of the Cascades hate the conditions in my garden. *Phlox adsurgens* 'Wagon Wheel' died in one year and *Phlox diffusa* did so even sooner.



I saw nice examples of *Phlox diffusa* (above) with lovely pale pink varieties at Pilot Rock in a woodland opening above Ashland.

A better offering was found west of Crater and Diamond Lakes just in the bank of the asphalt road. Here there was a deep mixture of lava pebbles with pumice grit forming a montane bed for superb pancakes of this difficult microphlox.

Left: An oddly unnatural-looking but successful, colonisation of the roadside by *Phlox diffusa*

---International Rock Gardener---

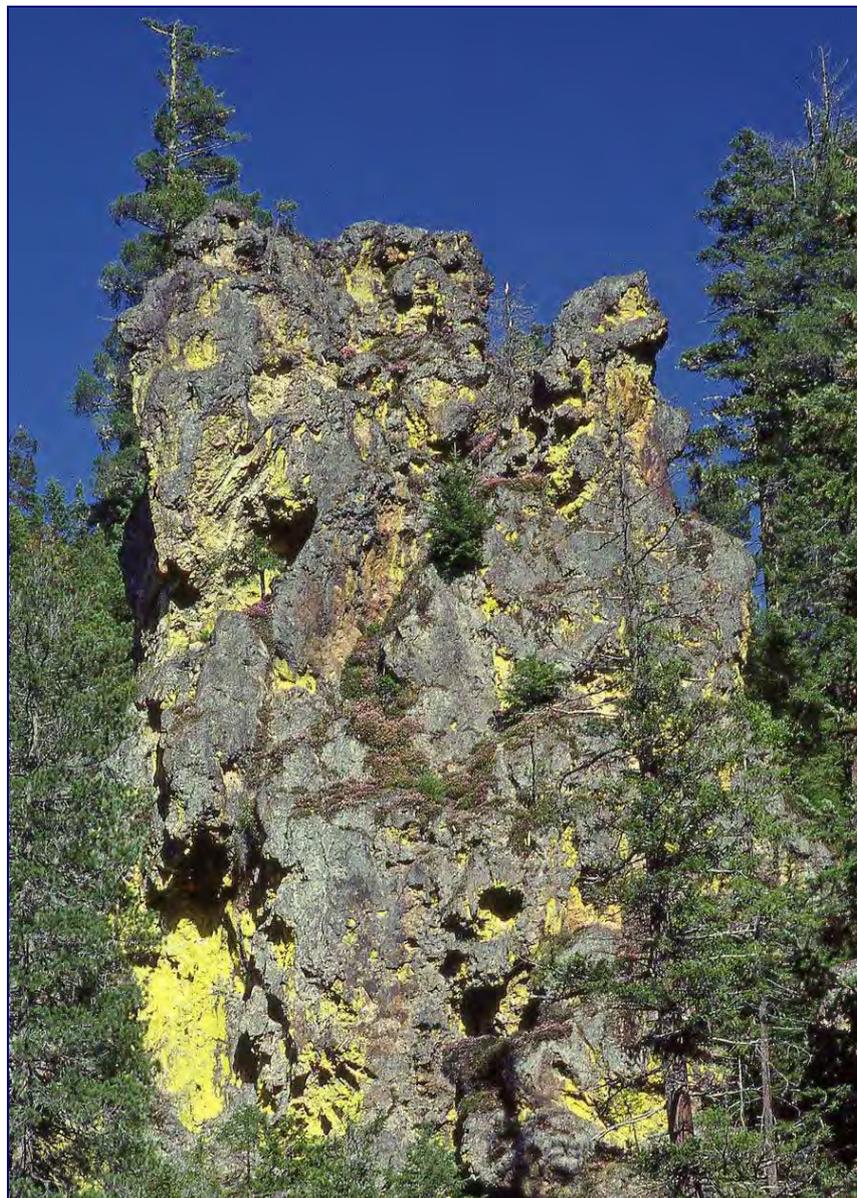


Kalmiopsis flowers photo Phil Pearson.

It was not easy to find a small area of rock towers in the woodland, which are the habitat of an ancient parent of Rhododendrons.

Kalmiopsis leachiana (L.E.Hend.) Rehder (*syn.Kalmiopsis fragrans* Meinke & Kaye) is the saxatile evergreen shrub that survived here near the ocean in the last glaciations. The acid rock is naturally painted with a sulphur

colour to enhance the solid green of the patches of *Kalmiopsis*. We scrambled steep slopes and climbed part of towers just to discover that there is no seed and that there is dangerous poison ivy protecting the bottom of this stony paradise. The picture (below) of their rocky habitat is a souvenir from co-owner of the late-lamented Grand Ridge Nursery, Phil Pearson, who also selected unusually coloured forms for his picture of the flowers.



Rocky habitat of the *Kalmiopsis*

photo Phil Pearson

---International Rock Gardener---

---Plant Portrait---

***Gentiana angustifolia* and its clones**

by ZZ and Jules Fourage

We suggest that the emblem of the Alpine Garden Society is probably *Gentiana kochiana*, the species with the biggest trumpets from acidic soils, which is now correctly placed under the old valid name of *Gentiana acaulis* L., together with *G. excisa*. This species can be a disappointment, flowering in some gardens and not in others. Some crosses with other species from the Acaulis Group perform better. My hot lowland garden with alkaline soil and no watering is now a paradise for another European species *Gentiana angustifolia*. I planted 70 seedlings from the white variety (a gift of the Czech plantswoman Anna Jílková) and the result was a mixture of icy blue (below) to dark blue vigorous plants with narrow leaves and a free flowering habit.



All clones are variable in the sizes of their lanceolate leaves forming the edge of mature rosette: 45 x 7 mm (the smallest) and 50 x 20 mm (the biggest). About 50% of the seedpods have fertile seed. The soil where they are planted is quite heavy with good clay content.



Gentiana angustifolia spreading across a flat area.

---International Rock Gardener---

Plants are vigorous, quickly spreading into the free space around. The biggest plant, seen in the photograph above, is 60 x 30 cm.



The best colour from this big bunch of seedlings has one shy plant kept under working name 'Karlik'. (left)

We were interested to see this blessed species in the wild and collected some seed. The goal was fulfilled in the small limestone [Chartreuse Massif](#) (Mt. Charmant Som) north of Grenoble in France. Later we saw a large colony on limestone south of Gap, where this gentian enjoys a northern slope with some grasses at 1400 m (a little bit higher than the dwarf forms of *Daphne cneorum* var. *pygmaea*).

There is one vigorous dark blue form offered on the Internet as *G. a.* 'Rannoch' and an icy blue variety is in cultivation as *G. angustifolia* 'Iceberg'.

Below: *G. angustifolia* 'Iceberg' in the May Show in Prague



We know from Fritz Kummert that the original icy blue variety is called *G. a.* 'Mrs. Vorger' and we are pleased to have first hand information from the grower who introduced this cultivar. Praise must be given to the well-seasoned international rock gardener Jules Fourage from Belgium, also famous for his [ornithological photos](#) and who is more known for his studies of

---International Rock Gardener---

Primula allionii (articles in the AGS Bulletins). Jules, who has a valuable collection of forms and cultivars of *Gentiana angustifolia* provided some excellent illustrations and information for us.



Gentiana angustifolia in the garden of Jules Fouarge

Jules Fouarge tells us that because of severe back problems he has stopped his activities in alpine gardening though he does “continue to grow some plants but only those requiring little care. Among them, I keep some gentians of the Acaulis group, especially *Gentiana angustifolia*. Some pictures are on the website of [Herman Mylemans](#) but I have here a big collection of pictures some of which I give you for your purposes.

I have two comments about two whitish and a violet form of *G. angustifolia*: The late Mrs. Vorger who lived near Grenoble in France gave *Gentiana angustifolia* ‘Mrs. Vorger’ to me. The plant was collected in the vicinity of the limestone plateau south of Grenoble called Vercors Massif.

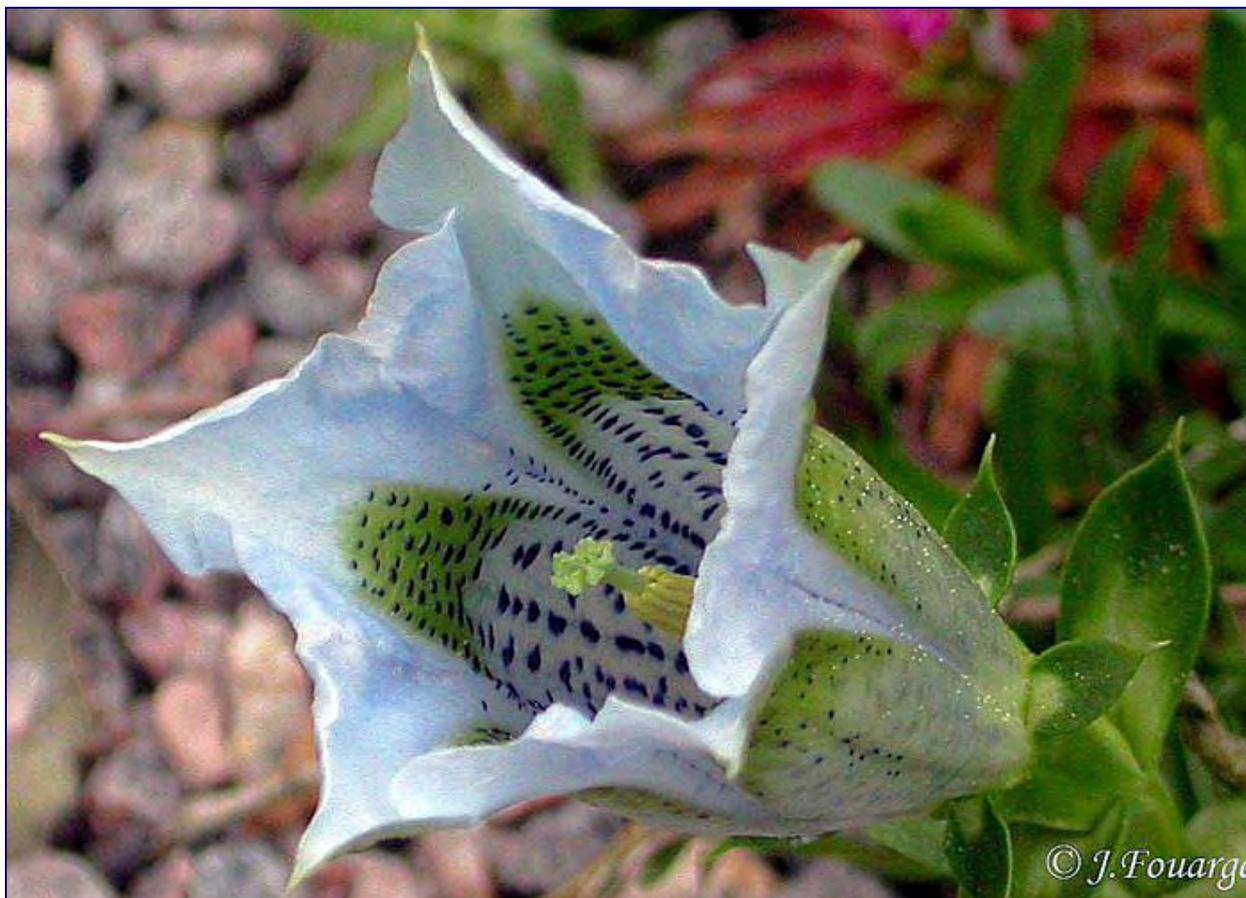


Gentiana angustifolia forma alba



G. angustifolia ‘Christian Lavaysse’

---International Rock Gardener---



G. angustifolia 'Christian Lavaysse' (above) was given to me by the grower a few years before his unexpected death at only 47 years.

The violet coloured *G. angustifolia* 'Gleize' (left) refers to the Col de Gleize in the French Eastern Alps north of Gap.

Maybe these plants and a lot of others growing here from seed could still be alive. So far I have given rooted cuttings to [Jurgen Peters](#), a German nurseryman from Uetersen." J.F.

The very bad summer of 2010 and winter/spring 2011 killed exposed and older *Daphne x rollsdorfii* in Central Bohemia but not one *Gentiana angustifolia* was damaged. I hope that this richly illustrated informative article will satisfy all lovers of the easy and mat forming alpines. Z.Z.

---Plant Portrait---

Hypericum with a Golden Future

text and photos by ZZ

There are two hardy rock garden plants under the kind protection of St. John in our continental hot gardens: the shrubby *Hypericum olympicum* and the more herbaceous *Hypericum cerastioides*. Both self-seed around and both are too large for small gardens. Suddenly a third species appeared on the scene, having more moderate seed propagating qualities but it is up to 30 cm across and up to 8 cm tall in seedtime in open soil. The name *Hypericum kazdaghense*

---International Rock Gardener---

suggests its Asia Minor origin (Dag = mountain in Asiatic languages). The species was described quite recently* and it is endemic to one mountain called Kaz Dag or Kaz Dağları.



The first international effort to sell this valuable alpine plant comes from Eastern Canada. In the Wrightman Alpines nursery catalogue are pictures and the short text: "*NEW- vigorous congested mats, absolutely prostrate; bright yellow flowers; a good mat former for hot, dry conditions*". I believe that the party of Halada, Jurášek, Pavelka and Zvolánek introduced this remarkable species a few years ago from the West End of Turkey, namely [Trojan's Mt. Ida](#). The nation of Troy were immigrants of sunken Atlantis and they named their close Olympus after wife of Atlantic king Poseidon - Ida. Mt. Ida is a nice peak facing towards stolen Greek islands. Her poetic name is changed into prosaic Kaz Dağları and to visit her divine alpine summit you must pay expensive National park tickets and pay for petrol to your Turkish guardian. The comfort is the good long road from the seashore to the top ridge.



The mountain is a treasure-keeper of plants of all kinds. A picture of one of them just arrived to my office from Josef Jurášek. It is the short, 5-15 cm, lovely pink *Allium kurtzianum* (left). This blooms together with *Hypericum kazdaghense* at the windy top ridge at 1750 m elevation. The ridge is formed from dolomitic limestones, marbles and a sort of serpentine. *Hypericum* prefer the volcanic substrate, where they are very dwarf so the

---International Rock Gardener---

flowers look relatively large. There, *Hypericum kazdaghense* is addressed to the ground, under 3cms high and about 7 cm across. You can get a clue from this for cultivation: grow only in sand and grit and no peat. Baking in a south facing steep and narrow crevice must be its ideal situation.

My two year old plants in a heavier alkaline soil are slightly variable: the smallest form a mat 18 cm across and the biggest is 30 cm in diameter. I was too careful to plant this alpine plant toward scorching sun. A Spartan diet and southern exposure will surely bring smaller specimens for our pleasure. Plants are able to cover themselves in shiny yellow flowers in June/July and for a longer time show many samples of flowers of good sizes.

I love the youngest base branches with their silvery blue shine and miniature leaves in crowded order. Flowering stems are pale green with larger leaves. Roots run quickly down into the earth, but transplanting young plants is easy even in a drier climate.

[ED: *Neither *Hypericum kazdaghensis* nor *H. kazdaghense* Y.Gemici& E.Leblebici (1995) are fully accepted by the Kew Plant list.]



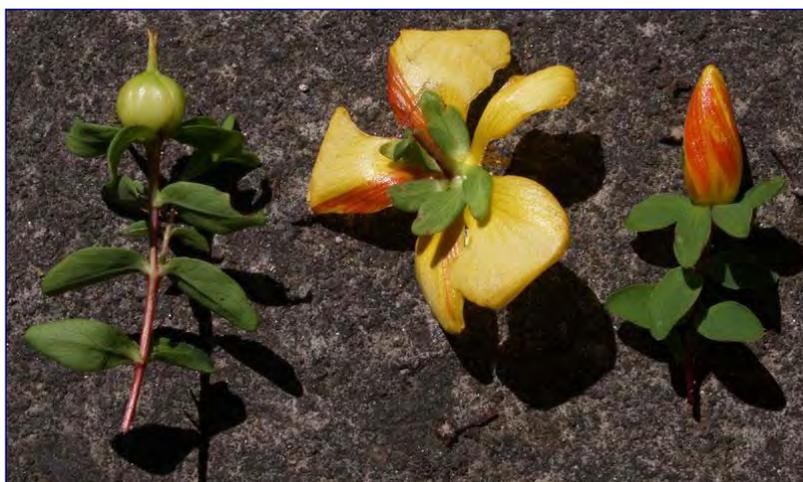
This new plant introduction will show deep division among rock gardeners: people of the cast praying for “an holistic approach to alpiners in the garden” would like to have this alpine bigger and the purists from continent prefer the smaller plant (the natural small size if possible). The miracle is that this new *Hypericum* will

satisfy both camps and even ‘green’ people because this endemic species has exhibited antimicrobial activity against all the bacteria with which it has been tested.

---International Rock Gardener---

Another good little *Hypericum* for the rock garden by J. Ian Young

Hypericum reptans, another dwarf member of the St. John's Wort tribe, is a favourite of ours which is ideally suited to cultivation in colder, wetter areas. We have grown *Hypericum reptans* for many years here in North East Scotland and we find it an invaluable plant for a raised bed.



The foliage, neatly arranged in opposite pairs on reddish, completely prostrate, deciduous stems, spreads quietly to make a neat plant as a mat or as a cascade over the edge of a bed. The soft textured, light green leaves are only 12mm x 7mm. The tapered waxy looking buds, spiralled in red and orange and around 17mm in length, open to show the 40mm solitary golden flowers profusely borne over a long period of many months.

---International Rock Gardener---



The buds look to have been swirled by a brush with red paint on the outside so that only parts of the outer petals show the added colour.

Many descriptions seem to show this plant with very long, (as long as the petal segments) numerous stamens and some illustrations show this in a plant which might be up to 30cms high. The plants I have seen of that type seem to me to be quite different. 'Our' form, which has been much admired here has a neat circle of stamens just the length of the ovary, circa 5mm. This form does seem to replicate a herbarium specimen as collected by J.D Hooker and viewable online.

We have been told by Roy Lancaster that this form is from the eastern part of the range of *Hypericum reptans*.

