



THE
FRITILLARIA
GROUP



JOURNAL 51

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www.fritillaria.org.uk

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A small specialist journal such as ours relies heavily upon contributions from the members. The Editor welcomes all articles on the genus *Fritillaria*, in cultivation or in the wild, short or long. Please share your thoughts, insights and images with your fellow enthusiasts. The journal won't happen without you.

Please note that all pictures in this journal are copyright and are not to be copied without prior permission of the photographer.

Front cover picture: *Fritillaria affinis* 'Wayne Roderick' grown by Cyril Lafong (photo: Cyril Lafong)

Back cover picture: *Fritillaria minima* is very local in S.E.. Turkey (photo: Bob Wallis)

Chairman's Chatter

I am very happy to report that your editor was reminded that he had forgotten to include an excellent article by Yasemin Konuralp in the last issue so with grovelling apologies to Yasemin here it is. It is particularly embarrassing because it was I who had suggested that she was best positioned to get some photographs of this very local species for us all to enjoy.

Cyril Lafong's short description of his interest in yellow forms in the last issue was part of a much longer piece on his desiderata with some particularly striking photographs of often award-winning plants. He has sent me many more photos than we have space for, so I aim to trickle these into the journal in later issues so watch this space.

The pandemic has caused a significant hiccup in the well-being of many special interest groups such as ours and we are trying to get things back together again. One problem that we need to overcome imminently is the pending retirement of our treasurer, Pat Craven. We are still seeking either a treasurer to take over some of his responsibilities or a secretary who would allow us to rotate the Group's officers. It is not onerous, and all committee meetings are now held by Zoom so it doesn't even mean that you have to travel. Please let me, Pat or Sally know if you are willing to help in this way.

Bob Wallis

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Chasing the shortest *Fritillaria* in Turkey...

Yasemin Konuralp

The year is 2017, May 22. My husband and I are on our way from Antalya to Denizli to find Turkey's shortest *Fritillaria*, *F. byfieldii*. No one has ever seen this plant other than the person who found it and a person who is interested in plants as an amateur in the Denizli region. The yellow-flowered plant posted on his Facebook page looks very nice but the photographer never shares a location. I asked a friend of mine to take a location from the person photographing the plant. But he said that he is too busy now but we can go together next year if he is available. He then reported us to the forestry service.

We knew that we had to get out of the forest at the foot of the mountain and find the serpentine slopes. We were very tired at the third point we arrived at after two very long attempts with the vehicle to ascend and descend. Ahead of us was a steep slope. My hope was starting to fade. However, when I started climbing, I saw that this place was serpentine. The slope was indeed a crumbled serpentine land that glided as you walked, as in the article and the story of its discovery. I started scanning the slope, trying not to destroy it too much. The fruiting plant in the first photo must have been the fritillaria we were looking for. We decided to come next year to see the flowers. On our second visit, we thought, if we do it 20 days earlier, we should achieve our goal. The date is May 2, 2018. This time, we neither stopped by a coffee shop nor asked for directions. Our car was easy to identify by the locals. But we managed to get out of the village to the wooded area, out of sight. We found our area very easily with last year's GPS records. I was frustrated after a tiring climb. This time, the flowers have recently completed their life, the tepals have started to turn purple, and there have even been some that have passed into the fruiting period.

The few bulbs I have never flowered but are still alive. This year I keep them in serpentine soil and took them to my chalet located at an altitude of 1200 meters. I hope we will be able to see its beautiful yellow flowers. Or we will hit the road again...



By May 22nd 2017, *F. byfieldii* already has well-developed seed pods



On May 2nd 2018, the flowers of *F. byfieldii* had already faded.

Fritillaria Desiderata – the sequel

Cyril Lafong

In this article I will write about some memorable *Fritillaria* I have grown, come across or even sought and never found. *Fritillaria* is a genus that can offer everything from easy garden plants to those species that tax the skills and dedication of the best growers to bring them to flowering size. *Fritillaria* is my favourite genus among bulbous plants but it is also one of the most difficult genera to cultivate successfully and maintain a comprehensive collection on a consistent basis. You can occasionally have spectacular success with a species or variety when you think you have mastered their cultivation only to find that the following season, you lose most or all of your stock. Neglect, stupidity, mismanagement, pests, diseases, losing the knack, acts of God are all possible factors involved. This sadly is the fate of some of the *Fritillaria* mentioned below which are now only distant memories but there is always hope a few might become available again in future. Alternatively, there are some others that will survive for years without increasing or setting seeds and sometimes not even flowering.



F. serpenticola is for me the most attractive

As we have seen in my article in issue 50, I have sought yellow forms of the various species but naturally yellow-flowered species are also my personal favourites. Of all the small yellow *Fritillaria*, *F. serpenticola* is for me the

most attractive. It is native to serpentine soils in Antalya province, Turkey. This was once thought to be a subspecies of *F. carica* but it was significantly different to warrant specific status. It is only 10 cm tall with deep yellow conical flowers and 4-5 grey-green leaves. I do not find it as easy to grow as *F. carica*.



F. euboica from Euboea in Greece is only 5-10 cm tall and bears pretty bell-shaped bright yellow flowers.

F. minima from E. Turkey is even dwarfer but not so accommodating in cultivation. I only managed to flower it last year after I decided to grow it outside (see back cover).

Leaving the yellows: the wonderful *F. affinis* 'Wayne Roderick' has particularly large flowers (it's thought to be a triploid form) and was found in California by Wayne Roderick and the selection is named for him (see photo on front cover). It is reported to be widely grown in the US but has not persisted with me and is now rarely seen in the UK.



F. alburyana (above) is a beautiful, truly pink *Fritillaria* although some forms are a less attractive purplish colour. The strength of the pink is variable with palest to strongly coloured almost lacking tessellation. This snow-melt species is coveted by *Fritillaria* growers but is not easy to cultivate well, needing a cold winter followed by a warm spring to fully open the flowers after they have cleared the soil surface.



F. armena

F. armena is closely related to *F. caucasica* and somewhat similar but is shorter (5-15 cm) and the flowers are smaller but more delicate and charming.



Two colour forms of *F. chlorantha*

I grew the rare *F. chlorantha* (above) from Jim Archibald's seeds (JJA 0492808) collected in 2007 in Lorestan, western Iran where it grows on steep, north-facing, rocky hillsides. The flower is variable in colour from yellowy green (my favourite) to brown with green stripes and sits on a short stem with two wide glossy green leaves.



F. baisunensis,

I like flowers with black anthers, especially in the genus *Crocus*. In *Fritillaria*, the most striking species with black anthers I grow is *F. baisunensis*, a newly described species (2019) from Shurab, Baisun-tau in Uzbekistan, which has been in cultivation for over 15 years. I first flowered the species in 2008 as *Fritillaria sp. nov.*



A yellow form of *F epirotica*

F. epirotica has plum-coloured flowers although very rarely yellow forms occur in the wild. In cultivation, a pure yellow form appeared among a batch of seedlings from Jim & Jenny Archibald's wild-collected seeds (JJA 495200) in 2010 (from a sowing in 2001) and I admired it when it was shown at the Southport show by George Young in May 2013 (photo). The bulbs did eventually increase slowly and a potful with 9 flowers was shown at the East Lancashire show in 2019. However, the story has a sad ending because George told me that in September 2020, he potted up 10 apparently healthy bulbs, plunged in the same place in greenhouse and treated over winter as he has always done. Spring 2021, nothing appeared and when he tipped out the

pot there was nothing there. The plant did set seeds and the seedlings have flowered but a yellow one has not appeared yet.



F. falcata

F. falcata (above) is an intractable North American really dwarf (5-10 cm) species. In 1994, I received seeds from J & J Archibald and managed to nurture a bulb to flower after many years (photo). It was a most fascinating flower, greenish outside and yellow mottled with purple-brown inside but I

guess the exhaustion of flowering killed the plant. How much I would like to grow the plant again, but neither seeds nor bulbs are currently available.



F. gibbosa has a pleasing range of colour forms.

F. gibbosa is my favourite among the rhinopetalum group. It is still not widely grown after almost 60 years since its introduction by Paul Furse. I started raising stock from seeds more than 20 years ago and now cross-pollination ensures a steady supply of seeds. Plants vary in vigour and sometimes a robust one will split more readily to give a pleasing, uniform potful with identical flowers. This year I noticed one plant with a yellowish central patch on the tepals in a family pot. Yellow and also white forms are known to be in cultivation. Some years ago, a dwarf form, only 8-10 cm tall and with only 4-5 flowers, was available but although I still grow it, it is more difficult to please.

F. macedonica is a high-altitude plant of the Albanian mountains, Macedonia and not easy to grow. I grew it from seeds and it was slow to reach flowering

size. It seems intermediate between *F. latifolia* and *F. tubiformis* with large bells on very short stems. (See illustrations in Journal 46 pp 16 and 18)



F. maximowiczii



F. oranensis

F. maximowiczii is a sought-after species known from north eastern China and eastern Russia. This needs to be grown cool at all times. Growth starts quite early, so the bulbs need to be repotted in early summer.

F. oranensis (previously *F. messanensis* var. *atlantica*) (P.C. 2011) is shorter than *F. messanensis* with broader very grey basal leaves. It hails from high in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco. Unfortunately, it is not as easy to grow as *F. messanensis* itself, which is a good and reliable garden plant. The plant illustrated was grown from wild-collected seeds I received from Norman Stevens. It is clonal having multiplied modestly from a single bulb. Unfortunately, as often happen with good clones, it has not endured.



F. pluriflora (above) is one of few pink *Fritillaria* in existence and a delightful but capricious plant. I grew it well for a while and it even set seeds but the stock has since gone back. Normally it is deep pink but in wetter habitats, white, pale pink, dark pink, rose-purple or even cerise flowered forms are seen. In 1990-1991 a white *F. pluriflora* was exhibited at a show in Bristol. The occurrence of the pure white form is about 1 in 10,000 in the wild.



F. poluninii (above) is something special and worth all the care. The flowers are wide-open and pure white with brown veining and sit on stems only 5-10cm tall. Unfortunately, the plants do not produce bulbils or rice but they will set seed if hand-pollinated although I have found germination to be very erratic. This is one of the rarest and most desirable of all fritillaries. I managed to grow a pot with 10 flowers but the plants have since gone back.



The form of *F. recurva* I am currently growing which may be closer to *F. gentneri*.

I grew *F. recurva* 'Sensational' for a while 25 years ago, courtesy of Kath Dryden, and it was indeed a sensational selection but is impossible to find now. It was a registered clone from Holland, selected for its vigour, extra height and the flowers that are of a stunning bright scarlet colour with yellow chequering. Despite its vigour, it has probably succumbed to a virus or fungal

disease. The photo taken in 2020 shows a form of *F. recurva* I am currently growing which may be closer to *F. gentneri*. I got it from ‘Cambridge Bulbs’ in 1995 and it has been growing without protection outside close to a wall for the past 21 years but has never increased from a single bulb.



F. striata

F. striata has long been on my wish list. It is established in cultivation and a few green-fingered or lucky people grow and flower it. I have been growing it from seeds for the last few years but it was not until last year that I had the pleasure of admiring the delightful and pleasantly fragrant flower. The white flowered version is supremely beautiful but probably not in cultivation.



F ussuriensis

F. ussuriensis usually has purple, brown chequered flowers. I grew *F. ussuriensis* 'Pink Foundling' (above photo), a pink variety, for a while when it was available about 15 years ago but I have lost it. It was originally multiplied clonally from a single original bulb collected by Dr. A. Seisums near Vladivostok during the famous Baltic expedition in 1993. Another selected clone with far less chequering and a much stronger deep colour was also available in the past under the handle of 'Pink Form'.



F. verticillata

In 2019 I was fortunate to receive bulbs of a striking form of *F. albidiflora* with pink anthers (*F. albidiflora* var. *rhodanthera* = *F. verticillata*). After successful cross pollination, seeds have been distributed to a few *Fritillaria* enthusiasts, so hopefully this will get established in cultivation in a few years' time. This is now lumped into *F. verticillata* but among the plants I grow, the flowers of *F. albidiflora* open wide when mature whereas in the *F. verticillata* they remain campanulate.



F. whittallii

F. whittallii has green flowers with variable amount of brown chequering. The variety 'Greenlight' also has green flowers but they are dusted with a light silvery chequering, making it subtly appealing and among my favourites. Widely available some years ago, now it is not easy to track down.



My own hybrid: *F.* 'Turkish Delight'

Hybrids occur in the wild when different species overlap, e.g., *Fritillaria pinardii* x *aurea*, *F. armena* x *alburyana*. Man-made hybrids are not common and only a few are currently grown. *F.* 'Turkish Delight' (*F. kurdica* 'Turkish Glow' x ?*F. aurea*) was selected from my own seedlings from seeds of *F. kurdica* 'Turkish Glow' sown in 2009. Only one seedling showed this hybrid feature, the others being consistent with straight *F. kurdica*. The photograph shows a pot of this stunning hybrid which has increased slowly over the past five years. The flowers are large and look closer to *F. aurea* than *F. kurdica*. In fact, it looks quite similar to some of the forms of *F. aurea* that grows up on Bolkar Dag in Turkey (*F. aurea* f. *cilicio-aurica*). Unlike *F. aurea* it does not produce bulbils (rice grains) but sometimes a small bulb is formed around a mature bulb and this is a means of increase. Mature bulbs will also occasionally divide in two.

Noteworthy Fritillaria which I am currently growing as bulbs or seeds that have not yet flowered

F. aurea has always been one of my favourites and I particularly like the forms with flowers on short stems. I am currently growing seedlings of *F. aurea* from Bolkar Dag in Turkey (*F. aurea* f. *cilicio-aurica*) and eagerly awaiting flowering. These plants are scarcer than the typical forms but the tessellation on the flowers is more marked.



F. avromanica is extremely rare in cultivation (photo: Bob Wallis)

I am growing a few seedlings of *F. avromanica* which has just recently been described in 2015. I am keenly awaiting the first flowering. It is not unlike *F. chlorantha* with brown, striped green flowers but the leaves are glaucous, not shiny.

F. crassicaulis (syn. *wabuensis*) is a high-altitude species from China recognised by its large greenish yellow flower with slight brown chequering and its numerous, rather wide flat leaves in whorls or pairs. In 2009 I grew a plant purchased as *F. crassicaulis* and the flower was brownish purple with slight yellow tessellation which did not fit with the description of the species and reminded me of *F. unibracteata*. I am now growing another clone which failed to flower this year (2021), I might have more luck next year.



F. unibracteata

I have been growing *F. delavayi* for a couple of years but it has not yet reached a big enough size to flower.

F. persica is one of the taller eye-catching species which I have grown for a long time but is frustrating as it only flowers occasionally. *F. persica* 'Twin Towers Tribute' is named in memory of the Twin Towers and is a sport of *F. persica* producing two stems per bulb and reputedly flowers more reliably than the type species. This selection was available from a few nurseries this year and I have acquired a few bulbs to provide a fine display next year.

I received seeds of a yellow form of *F. reuteri* last year and hope one or more of the seedlings will turn out to be yellow flowered.

F. rugilosa is the latest *Fritillaria* to be described (2021), a new species endemic to the Fergana Valley, South Kyrgyzstan. Superficially it resembles a dwarfer form of *F. gibbosa*. Seeds were available this year but it will be several years before I see the first flowers.

Other *Fritillaria* I have sought but never found

A single gorgeous plant of *F. alburyana* with pure white flowers was found during a SRGC guided tour to Eastern Turkey in May 2012. I doubt whether it is in cultivation.

A dwarf variant of *F. meleagris* now given specific status, *F. burnatii* is worth seeking out although it is not so easy to come by. It is reputed to be slow to multiply and rarely sets seeds.

On the southern Zagros mountains, there are some stunning colour forms of *F. gibbosa*, including a pure, spotless white. A delectable yellow form is also occasionally found in NE Iran. These last two colour forms are known to be in cultivation and are among my most sought-after *Fritillaria*. I received seeds of the white form last year but unfortunately germination was very poor (only one seed germinated).

F. roylei has yellowish-green to brownish-purple flowers chequered purple. The plant is usually tall (20-60 cm) but a 15 cm tall form with yellow-green flowers was found in the Nalgan Pass, around 4600 m, North-west Indian Himalaya and has been named 'Nalgan Dwarf'. It was reported as staying dwarf in cultivation but it is a plant I have pursued but never found. I guess it is no longer in cultivation.

My current wish list include many newly discovered and described species: *F. asumaniae*, *F. byfieldii*, *F. dasphylla*, *F. fusca*, *F. gibbosa* white and yellow, *F. hajastanica*, *F. kaiensis*, *F. muraiana*, *F. phitosia*, *F. pinetorum*, *F. pluriflora* White, *F. przewalskii*, *F. regellii*, *F. shikokiana*, *F. sinica*, *F. sonnikoviae*, *F. sporadum*, *F. striata* White, *F. tokushimensis*, *F. yuzhongensis*, and of course all the ones lost as indicated in this article.

I need a second lifetime! 😞



Editor: Cyril sent me this picture of a fabulous white form of *F. stenantha*, a plant that I have never seen. Perhaps we can persuade him to tell us something about it for the next issue!

Recent Literature: *Fritillaria arsusiana*, a new species from Southern Anatolia. Yıldırım & Tekşen in Phytotaxa 502(2) 133-159 (2021).

In this article, the authors describe a new species from the Amanus range above the coastal village of Arsuz, Hatay Province in Southern Turkey. They acknowledge that it is closely related to *F. amana* but differs in its smaller sized bulbs and flowers and, most noticeably, by the glaucous stem leaves which are normally bright green in *F amana*. All the measurements made show considerable overlap with those of *F amana* and are very variable characters anyway depending not only on genotype but also on the growing conditions extant at the time of collection. So, we are left with the colour of the stem leaves as the main distinction and the question: “is this difference significant enough to generate a new name?”

When we reappraised *F. amana* and *F. hermonis* in 2002 (The Plantsman New Series 1: 111-116), we noticed this difference in one of the specimens we examined. This stock came from Cambridge Bulbs and was originally sourced on the pass above Belen in Hatay province. Belen is only about 50 km NE of Arsuz so they are very obviously the same thing. It is also noticeable that this clone (n.b. it propagates vegetatively by bulblets so it is a “clone”) has bright green leaves on immature bulbs like all the other *F amana* we looked at and we deduced that it was just a minor variation of *F amana*. We should also not forget that *F amana* occurs both north into the eastern Taurus range and southwards in Jebel Nusairiah, Syria of Arsuz so *F arsusiana* is in the middle of *F amana* distribution. So is it worth a new name? May be not!

Subscriptions

Subscription rates are unchanged for the year from 1 October 2022. However, banks have started to levy charges for Community Accounts, in our case £5 per month plus £0.40 for every cheque processed. Our subscription rates are very modest, and since the majority of members now pay electronically, we ask that all future payments by cheque include an extra 40p to cover bank charges. Please use online bank transfer for payments if possible, or better still set up a standing order payable annually on 1 October. Our banking details will be included in subscription reminders and seed exchange information.

Seed Distribution

Last year was the first that EU legislation prevented us from sending seed to the EU and it is now also not possible to import seed into the UK without prohibitively expensive phytosanitary certification. We will still be able to send permitted seed to Australia, New Zealand and the US. In recent years overseas donors have contributed very generously, and have greatly enriched our distribution. This year we shall be entirely dependent on UK donors and therefore ask that all members donate seed or bulblets if they possibly can.

KEY DATES

Deadline for donations: Wednesday 24th August 2022 (If your donation will be later than this, please send details of species and whether it is seed or bulblets).

List publication: 29th August 2022 (If you want a list but have not received one by 3rd September please inform Pat Craven).

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£3.75