

International Rock Gardener



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September 2010



In IRG 8 we brought the sad news of the death of the great plantsman and seed collector Jim Archibald. We felt that his contribution to our gardening community was so significant and the widespread reaction to his loss so heartfelt that we should make further mention of Jim's work over so many years - the like of which we are unlikely to see again. With the sheer number of JCA (James Cartledge Archibald) and JJA (Jim and Jenny Archibald) reference numbers in the plant collections of so many of us, not to mention the other seed provided by them through their seed lists, the spread of "Archibald Seed" through both private gardens and the nursery trade has been very broad indeed. By its very nature, seed is readily transportable and even now still able to be traded around most of the world, meaning that a seed business can have a much wider effect on the dissemination of plants around the horticultural world than plant sales can achieve. Without Jim and his ilk we would be restricted to only native plants in our gardens and that, while giving interesting possibilities in many cases, would not meet with too much enthusiasm from the average gardener. Let us take as an example a vegetable - it would be tough on the rest of the world if only the South Americans could grow their own potatoes and enjoy them straight from the garden!

----Mountains in the Gardens----

JIM ARCHIBALD, PLANT HUNTER *EXTRAORDINAIRE*

(1 September 1941 – 9 August 2010)

by [John Watson](#)



“Dear John & Anita,

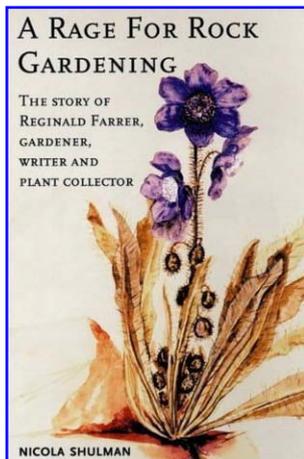
“This introductory paragraph is a brief (general) note to our oldest and best friends ... The prognosis (for me) is not good.” A touching personal farewell then followed:

“Look after yourselves and keep collecting. There are not many of us left, almost extinct. Definitely rare and critically endangered.”

Jim Archibald, 20 June. 2010.

By action and reputation Jim became a figure on the international specialised horticultural stage. Nothing of his on the written page indicated a given geographical origin. Yet only hear him speak, and the modulated regional accent that was pure Edinburgh and never altered throughout his life immediately betrayed his proud identity. Jim was as unmistakably Scottish through and through as Stuart tartan, a haggis or, and we don't doubt he'd love this one – Bonnie Scotland's prominent, flamboyant-blooming and prickly national flower, the thistle!

Tributes have been made for Jim from [many people in many countries](#), and have covered his varied talents and activities. It seems singularly appropriate to have one penned by one of his contemporaries in, as he sadly and prophetically reflected, the rarefied and diminishing world of plant exploration and introduction. So I offer a heartfelt, nostalgic and I trust honest remedial contribution from my own parallel – if limited – viewpoint.

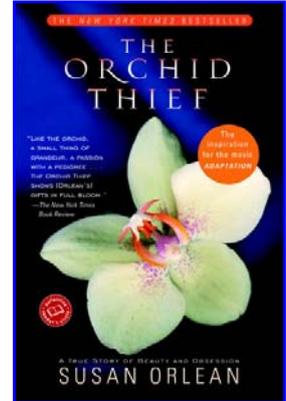
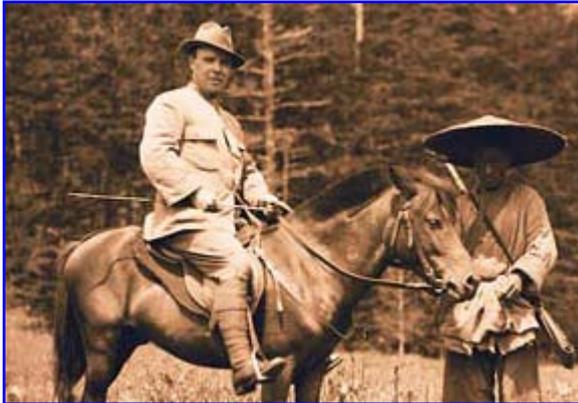


“Plant collecting is arduous and exacting work, the least part of which, as it has been said, is the finding of the plants. ... Farrer described it as ‘the most harrowing form of gambling as yet invented by humanity’, and declared that a shilling packet of seed would be cheap at sixty.” Nicola Shulman, [‘A Rage for Rock Gardening’](#): 87-88. (2001).

It might be supposed that plant collectors in their small, esoteric and highly specialised world must needs form a tight and supportive brotherhood. Ah, what a naïve, unreal, Utopian dream (we can just imagine Jim snorting over his pipe at the very idea). Oh yes, like fans of the Old Firm all sitting down to a peaceful, civilised tea party together after a fixture at Ibrox or Celtic Park, perhaps? Check history, Dear Reader. Your average plant hunter is prone to be a suspicious, jealous, paranoid, territorial lone-wolf of an animal. He isn't beyond the odd sneaky trick either, to conceal from

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rivals the communal bounty of Nature he has unilaterally declared belongs to himself and himself alone. (Male gender only here: I fondly suppose any of our kind among the fair sex to be less aggressively competitive, if no less intrepid!) Think of that other indomitable Scot, George Forrest, vs Reginald Farrer (another wordy, pedantic English fellow!) or anyone he considered to be invading his patch (i.e. most of China).



“Some orchid hunters were killed by other orchid hunters.” and “When men working for rival growers crossed paths, they sometimes killed each other ... Both (plant) hunters were heavily armed and belligerent. After boasts and threats and a display of side-arms they nearly ended up in a duel.” [Susan Orlean](#), ‘The Orchid Thief’: 67-69. (1998).

Fortunately, that level of intensity had largely evaporated from our chosen genteel pastime by the time Jim’s and my generation arrived on the scene. Indeed, I have a happy and indelible memory from the late 60s of a carefree gathering over a meal in London after a Vincent Square RHS show. It consisted of a fair collection of us, a handful of then neophytes enjoying each other’s company and swapping anecdotes.

As I recall, we included at least **Brian Mathew** and Jim himself, with Margaret Merritt, **Sydney Albury** and Martyn Cheese from the bunch that made up my teams.



Crocus mathewi - named for Brian Mathew photo [JIY](#)

Trillium ovatum ‘Roy Elliott’ –fine very dwarf form grown from seed collected by [Wayne Roderick](#) (who was head of the California native section at the U.C. Botanical Garden for 24 years) and raised and named by [Kath Dryden VMH](#). photo by [Mike Ireland](#)

Roy Elliott was then the highly regarded and authoritative Editor of The Alpine Garden Society Bulletin. He avuncularly dubbed the leading lights among us ‘Young Lions’, and regarded us as heirs to Farrer, Forrest et al., the shining new hopes for continuing plant introductions. (Perhaps ‘mini’ Farrers and Forrests would be more appropriate in that [swinging era of Mary Quant!](#)) Alas, only two of those just mentioned are like me, alive and kicking still.
Scientia longa, vita brevis.

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***Fritillaria alburyana* honouring Sydney Albury**

photo [JIY](#)

When working in the field around roughly the same time and places, both we and Jim used to impute any freshly dug holes encountered in Turkey to each other though we only found out years later that he and his blamed 'That Watson lot', while our villain was always 'The Arch-fiend Archibald'. There was also our jocular and irreverently [Pythonesque](#) *New to Science* hymn. This we sang to the tune of *Bread of Heaven* (correctly [Cwm Rhondda](#), what a remarkable anticipation of Jim & Jenny's home region!), belting it out at triumphant maximum decibels following particularly fruitful sites as we 'landrovered'

across Turkey. Refrain: 'New to science, new to science. Found by us and us alone, us alone ... Found by us and no one else. Not by Davis, Not by Mathew, Not by J.C. Archibald ... Archibald. Not by J.C. Archibald.' etc., etc. (Polunin, the Furses and any more were fitted into the verses.) Including such horsing about, rivalry was largely friendly, comparative and twofold. It served as a measure of competence in our early and less secure days. We also appreciated we were bound together collectively. We had to do well, satisfy the desperately limited number of specialised subscribers we all shared, and fill them with confidence. They must be kept convinced that to continue digging into their pockets for 'expedition' shares was a Good Thing. So: How were we matching up to the rest? And: Were they cutting the mustard?

For all that, we basically worked individually, as most collectors always have. Few are those perfect, persistent partnerships such as [Ludlow & Sherriff](#), [Ruiz & Pavón](#) (but think of poor, maltreated, cast-aside [Dombey](#)) or [Humboldt & Bonpland](#). There's usually too little glory and gain to go around for more than one. If a partner or team is needed, collectors such as Peter Davis, Jim, [Brian Mathew](#) and I have tended to take on board competent lay outsiders or amateur enthusiasts who represent little or no threat to our career profiles (with exceptions, such as Davis & Polunin).

Even so, familiarity in the field can breed slightly more than contempt:



"12 September: R[eginald] has been more annoying today than I have ever seen him. Some day soon I will beat him up. He has the superiority in brains but at least I can hurt him bodily & if I begin his will be a fruity sight." - So wrote [Euan Cox](#) (left) of the Scottish family of plant-hunters, authors and rhododendron growers, on a personality clash with Farrer.

The ideal, of course, is the inseparable marriage pairing. [Paul and Polly Furse](#) are probably the most celebrated couple, being immortalised in *Eremurus furseorum*, *Scilla* (or *Fessia*) *furseorum* and *Sempervivum furseorum*.



left: A detail from an original watercolour 'Gazania Hybrids' by Rear Admiral John Paul Wellington Furse, artist and botanist.

right: ***Campanula* 'Paul Furse'**
photo [RobinPearce/ Worlds End Garden](#)
Blue-violet flowers on arching stems with a branching habit.



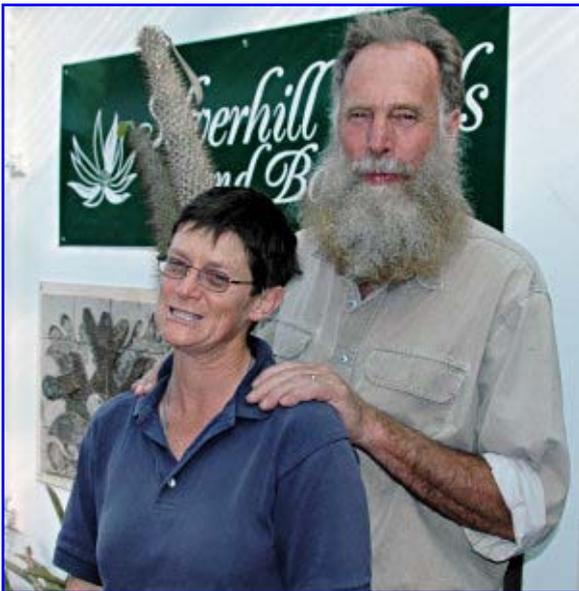
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left: American plant hunter [Dan Hinkley V.M.M.](#) with Sue and Bleddyn Wynn-Jones of [Crŷg Farm Nursery](#) in North Wales. photo by [John Grimshaw](#)

We might cite in addition the pairings of [Bleddyn & Sue Wynn-Jones](#) from the UK and [Rod & Rachel Saunders](#) of Silverhill Seeds from South Africa.

Jim and I also co-incidentally hit that happiest of jackpots as J&JA, Jim & Jenny Archibald, and [F&W, Anita Flores de Watson & John Watson.](#)



left: Rachel and Rod Saunders

One result of the typical plant explorer's temperament will also come as a surprise to many if not most. Unless we've collected together in the field, we may have very little direct face-to-face communication. Somehow we seem to live in quite remotely separated localities, seldom research in the same institution at the same time, are freelance, and often on the move. Nor can I recall many instances of significant written correspondence between our genre ([Humboldt and Bonpland](#) being one worthy anomaly). In all likelihood it may often boil down to having too much to do in too little time, too many other irons in the fire, rather than aversion. We know aspects of each other's professional lives inside out from field-lists, autobiographical travel writings, introductions recorded

in the literature, attending each other's lectures now and again, and reports from mutual friends.

right : John and Anita Watson

We may meet briefly but effusively at shows, or at weekend and international conferences. Even then I can recall trying to get a decent word or two in edgeways with Jim, Brian or [Kit \(Grey-Wilson\)](#), only to be unable to approach for their clamouring hordes of surrounding, idolatrous fans. 'Rock' stars indeed! With luck we might have managed eye-contact and a quick wave over the sea of heads, nothing more. So the odds are we may never spend 24 hours together under the same roof (or stars, or canvas). Jim and I never did. We've known each other best during the equivalent times Rossini



referred to, for musical compositions, as the follies of his youth and sins of his old age. We mostly lost touch during our 'middle periods'. Certainly mine was the standard 'dull middle period' of classical music, but Jim continued on a high with The Plantsmen nursery and related enterprises, then renewing exploration at full steam ahead in the 80s to what would become a far more roving, international *curriculum vitae*. It took almost a decade before I dragged myself out of the morass of Four Seasons Nursery (for want of a better way to describe it) and paralleled him again in the

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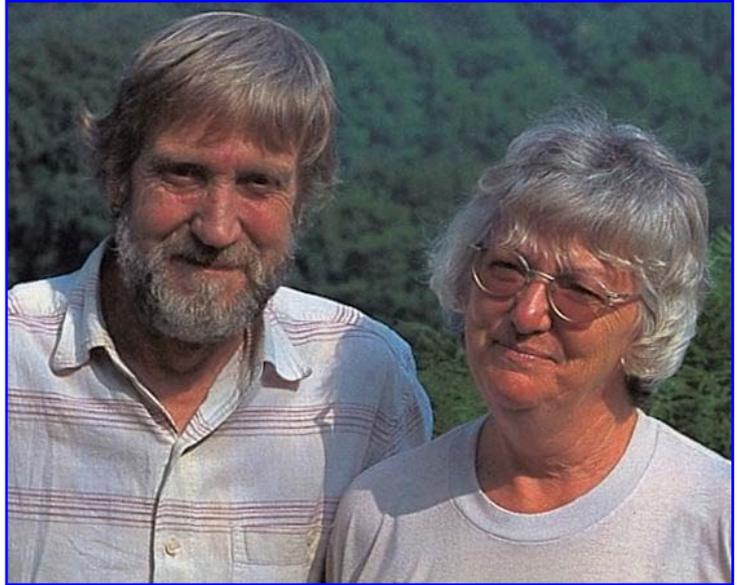
glorious activity we were both born to. Occasional inklings of his and Jenny's productive travels and superb introductions, especially from Turkey, our old stamping ground, would meanwhile reach my wistful hearing or gaze, and awaken envious longings. Yet I'm sure that at any time from the later 60s onwards we never thought of one another as anything but close and interested friends and colleagues, and eagerly sought out whatever news we could of each other.

Fate drew us closer of late, particularly in the last decade. The planned wanderings of Jim and Jenny carried them ever further afield. That eventually took in South America, Anita's continent of birth and by then my permanent

residence and centre of study. We didn't meet up, but our interest in their achievements sharpened. A couple of fine calceolarias were recorded from their collections. We had spent decades of mostly futile and occasionally semi-successful attempts to introduce [Andean rosulate violets](#). How was it Jim and Jenny could make just one foray into the violas' stronghold, walk out with seeds on that single occasion only, and a client of theirs then swept the show board with a perennially persistent and magnificent flowering specimen, a Farrer Medal winner to boot? *Bull. Alp. Gard. Soc.* [66(1): 52-53, 67(4): 442] *

Ah, that Old Jim Black Magic.

No wonder we licked our wounds and took consolatory refuge in the backwaters of taxonomy!



Jim and Jenny Archibald

photo Bobby Ward



Viola columnaris, photographed at Volcán Copahue, Neuquén, Argentina by John Watson

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A short digression *

To snatch the chance for a technical aside here: although captioned and registered for posterity as *Viola dasyphylla*, the Farrer plant mentioned above is unquestionably *V. columnaris*. For the record, *V. dasyphylla* rosettes are always short and never form raised columns, as may those of eponymous *V. columnaris*. Although leaf blades of both species can be near-identical in outline, as a rule those of *V. columnaris* are notably more spatulate, at times broader than long, as in the photo of the show specimen just cited. Most obviously, *V. columnaris* has a tightly imbricate, tile-like rosette structure; *V. dasyphylla* is looser. A superb portrait of true *V. dasyphylla* in the wild taken by Ger van de Beuken appeared in the next issue of the same volume, [66(2): 238]. Plate 534 of the *AGS Encyclopaedia of Alpines* vol. 2 also shows it (which, in turn, is accidentally captioned *V. fluehmannii* !). All this in no way reduces or belittles the achievements of introducers and exhibitor.



left: *Viola dasyphylla* at Cerro Chapelco Neuquén, Argentina. photo John Watson

According to Rossow's key in *Flora Patagonica*, *V. dasyphylla* has a 3-lobed style crest and *V. columnaris* is 2-lobed. This is very hard to discern. There are other differences – for instance both have a shiny-sticky calyx but that of *V. dasyphylla* is usually black, as can be seen on the image whereas the calyx of *V. columnaris* is light green or a dull, pale, straw-yellow. None of this is evident in dried specimens, of course! It can be simple enough to identify species in the field but the differences can be so subtle that when it comes to defining them in print or a key there are real difficulties.

There are few collectors who could not spend long periods correcting their past misidentifications!

JW

We did in fact continue collecting and distributing seeds until the middle of the last decade. But the operation eventually became too stressful and financially unprofitable. It involved – extensive fieldwork to gather enough material to justify a list; drawing up and pricing the list in full; rough-cleaning; flying to the UK; final-cleaning and packeting; getting the lists printed; posting them out to prospective clients; processing /despatching resulting orders; plus incidental correspondence.

This is not entirely a self-absorbed litany. Jim and Jenny had to undergo much the same



Viola dasyphylla in Patagonia photo [Ger van den Beuken](#)

procedure every time they marketed their own direct wild gatherings, albeit that they travelled 'the other way round'.

It was then that Jim stepped in with the magnanimous offer to include in their lists however little or much seed material we might be able to manage, with no obligation to provide a regular annual supply. This has helped both to sustain us a little economically since and to keep our Andean introductions flowing.

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A further factor discouraged and disheartened us, touching Jim's sensitive nerve and perception deeply as well. We refer to the growing Kafkaesque effects of biodiversity rights and protective conservation concepts, allied to national measures to prohibit entry of agricultural pests and diseases. These may have been necessary in some form or other and to some degree, and may even have looked effective in theory. But once put into practice as legal, 'scientific' and bureaucratic measures they have become more like rabid monsters escaped from their Pandora's cage.



above: *Viola columnaris* in Patagonia photo [Ger van den Beuken](#)

Let alone their effect on 'bystanders' such as ourselves, they even damage the studies of responsible academics we know, as well as retarding protection and understanding of some of the very organisms they were designed to benefit. The likes of Jim, Roy Lancaster and ourselves have effectively been labelled 'ecological outlaws' by some academics and institutions (happily by no means all). This arose due to our material not having passed through a tortuous process of

official application, approval and checking by the country of origin, which consists of many interlinked steps, some of them quixotically illogical. So even if correspondence is acknowledged, as sometimes not, it is impossible for any but a handful with the highest institutional backing, limited and fixed aims, and all the (salaried!) time in the world on their hands to comply. Meanwhile, local cynical official corruption often rules OK, with rare plants ripped en masse from the wild as hapless victims. Enough of this. In the old days I would have said rivers of ink have already cascaded from Jim and myself on the topic. Perhaps the equivalent in this electronic age is our fingers having covered miles (kilometres?) on the keyboard!



left: *Viola fluehmannii* pictured in Chile by [Serge Aubert](#) of the [Station Alpine Joseph Fourier](#) which incorporates the [Alpine Botanical Garden of Lautaret](#), Chalet-Lautaret laboratory and arboretum Robert Ruffier-Lanche in Grenoble. The foliage is quite distinct from either *Vv. dasyphylla* or *columnaris*. Ed.

A review of Jim and Jenny's collected seed lists provides the full set of Jim's uncompromisingly acid and elegantly expressed reactions to the situation, laced with sardonic wit. A few years back we Watsons gave up formulating our opinions in black and white on these matters as a sheer waste of time that could be better and more gainfully spent. Clearly no one was in the least interested or influenced. We had been tilting at windmills. We noticed Jim's acerbic commentaries had disappeared from their latest seed lists too. Perhaps he came to the same conclusion. I should love to add a small, select anthology of his most pointed barbs as tossed at this common foe (to be headed 'Oh, bitter dictum', I think). Alas, I can't. Not here and now anyway. My incomplete set of treasured Archibald seed lists is buried somewhere semi-irretrievably in our endless rows of McDonald's frozen French fried potatoes boxes, which serve as chaotic, disordered overspill files in the lumber room. ... buried somewhere ... Jim would surely empathise and be thoroughly tickled by that.

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Meconopsis delavayi – named for the [planthunter](#) Delavay. (Two of the IRG team used to supply seeds of this plant to JJA seeds)

“In the hope that still more ridiculous fantasy will again bear a bit of prophetic truth, I look forward to a future when an International Society of Plantsmen will sway world government and be effective in the preservation of wildlife ... Its motto – ‘Conservation, Cultivation, Companionship’ will be universally acclaimed as summarising much of what makes life worth-while ...” Sampson Clay, ‘The Future of the Alpine Gardener’ [*Bull. Alp. Gard. Soc.* 29(1): 132. (1961)]

That was published precisely one year to the month before a 20-year-old Jim and I, at 25, set out on our maiden plant hunts to Corsica, and Turkey and the Lebanon respectively. It anticipates remarkably everything Jim came to stand for as his experience and knowledge matured and developed. He hated hypocrisy, pomposity and sham. But most of all, when it came to the wild plants he himself cared about so much, he was incensed by summary moral judgements, together with assumption of sweeping, unchallenged authority by those of

the scientific establishment he detested, as well as their servile horticultural ‘running dogs’. He considered such people to be less interested in genuine practical protective measures for threatened species than in exercising political power play and arrogant academic elitism by persecuting responsible growers without good cause, and in the most extreme cases, all forms of horticulture other than ‘hallowed’ botanical gardens. It would have been satisfying to record among his achievements that he had helped to change that history. But seemingly the juggernaut has become unstoppable and Sampson Clay’s fantasy, a concept and name so dear to Jim’s heart, has indeed sadly proved ridiculous. Our titular choice of job-description, ‘plant hunter’, should therefore be seen as deliberately provocative, and one we are sure Jim would have approved of as thumbing our noses, him posthumously, at his human pet aversions. The phrase ‘plant hunter’, not least the ambiguous word ‘hunter’, expresses the very essence of all that our powerful opponents in the worlds of biodiversity and conservation hold against those of us who are not of their rank, qualifications, status and exclusive circle. Good. Let them choke on it!

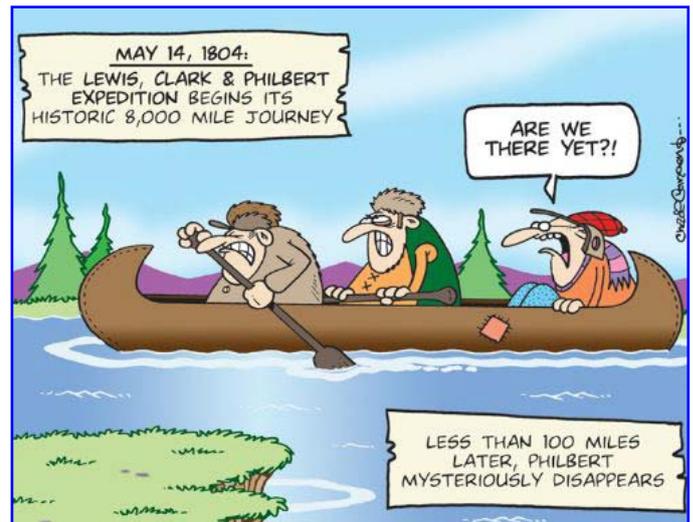
“For want of a better name we had called ourselves an expedition.” James C. Archibald, ‘Among Moroccan Mountains’ [*Bull. Alp. Gard. Soc.* 31(4): 314. (1963)]

Jim despised pretentiousness too, and, like us, avoided as far as he could use of the term ‘expedition’ to describe his travels in search of plants. His attitude towards it is implicit in the quotation above. Originally a grand word to describe audacious and large-scale primary exploration, it became co-opted and farcically debased in the 60s

by every bunch of academic students who had managed to con a grant enabling them to spend a month or so holidaying in southern sunshine under the guise of serious research. So we have avoided the ‘e’ word here barring this explanation to do with Jim.

As Vasco da Gama *'might'* have said:

I'm not trying to prove the world is round, I'm not trying to discover any "New World", I'm not even trying to find a short sea route to India: I'm just trying to find a new hat.



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Unfortunately, I am not the one to fit all the pieces together and complete a full jigsaw portrait of Jim. Colleagues and friends closer to him personally during his lifetime are far better placed to review aspects of his many-faceted operations on 'the home front' which are virtually unknown to me and mine. These include his supreme skill as a plantsman-gardener and exhibitor, which covers a quite remarkable range of rare and demanding subjects; the ability to propagate and handle in commercial quantities when wearing his nurseryman's hat; and the clerical and communicative labour involved in organising and distributing the fruits of their and others' field work. Of all this we feel unqualified to comment.



Lewis and Clerk expedition !

Our speciality is plant exploration and introduction from the wild. Even so, it would take a researcher of Herculean ability, experience and tenacity to track down and record the history in cultivation of all the plants Jim introduced in his time, either permanently, or by bringing them to our collective attention as desirable objectives (an often understated aspect of the plant hunter's achievements). Publication of an orderly inventory of Jim's fieldwork, which I don't have, would be a valuable task as well. Working from a few early references of his own and memory only, plus the unique biographical miniature by our joint biographer, [Bobby Ward](#), I have managed to formulate a vague overview.



left: *Matthiola tricuspidata* photo [Leif and Anita Stridvall](#)

Quite clearly Jim's first essay to Corsica in 1962 was of the same 'dip-big-toe-in-water' nature as my simultaneous initial work-out. Without doubt though, he would have been thrilled to have introduced the compacted, stemless form of

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Matthiola tricuspidata (described by another Scot, Robert Brown, in 1812) from there and seen it as permanently established as that other Mediterranean alpine seaside, *Morisia monantha*. But flying starts are seldom the rule in our trade.



left *Carduncellus pinnatus* photo [Franz Hadacek](#)

Morocco 1962 may have been a small step in the history of plant hunting, but it represented a giant step forward for Jim. Without need to refer to his own account, I would have become aware of *Carduncellus pinnatus* var. *acaulis* and *Linaria tristis* anyway, as these made their own mark. The plant which undoubtedly impacted most, and most lastingly on horticulture from that fieldwork though was the petunioide form of *Narcissus*

romieuxii which Jim named 'Julia Jane' (e.g., as featured in John Blanchard's monograph), Curiously, it didn't appear in Jim's travelogue, where he only mentions *N. bulbocodium* var. *nivalis* with the seed capsules grazed off.



Pot of seedlings *Narcissus romieuxii* ex JCA805 - showing variation photo JIY

Ed.: Archibald's offering of *Narcissus romieuxii*, including the famous JCA 805, and the subsequent generations from them, must be one of the most widely grown bulb collections across the world. There are endless discussions about which is the most petunioide type and every form seems to bring the same measure of delight to its growers. With coronas that can extend to 5cms across each bloom is a long lasting joy – especially in a northern glass house in the depths of winter! Easily grown and robust of nature, it can be seen from these photos that these narcissus really do deserve their reputation. A selection from JCA805 is also featured as the 'IRG 9' cover picture, by JIY.

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above: lovely white petunioide form from JJA seed ,
grown by [Rogan Roth](#) in South Africa

left: 'Julia Jane' as grown in New Zealand by Lesley
Cox

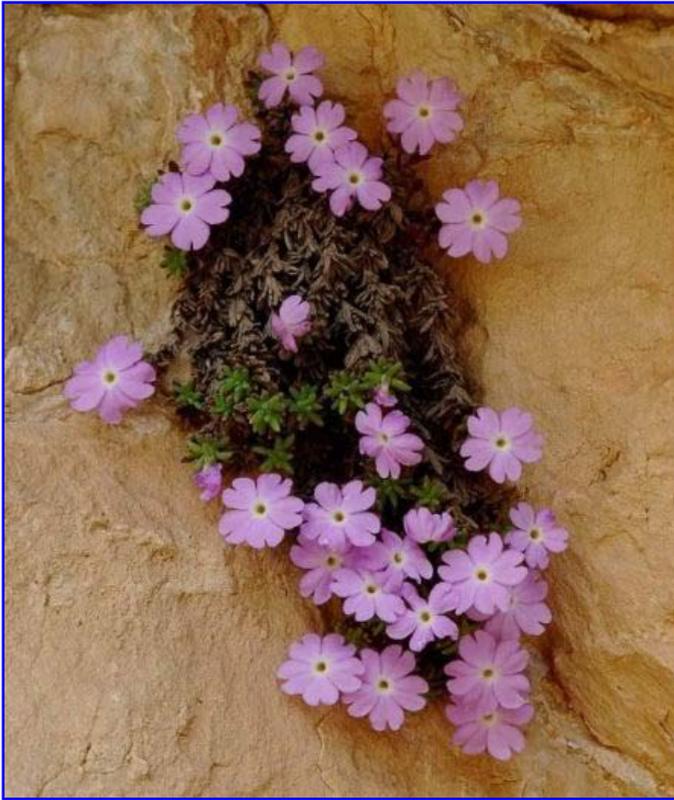
Ed.: Kind thanks to all those International Gardeners who sent their JCA plant photos to the IRG.

This beautifully clear and well-signposted beginning to Jim's collecting career is a public highway any of us can tread. After that the trail becomes more obscure. Casual maps in the form of his seed lists are required to follow his further progress in detail. To the loss of us all, he doesn't appear to have added to his opening literary burst by writing up his numerous subsequent trips, most immediately to Greece in 1964. Nevertheless, all the world knows of his next major itinerary, and it may perhaps be looked upon as his most outstanding: The Great *Dionysia* Hunt of 1966 (which also took in a lot more than dionysias). I recollect some of Jim's by then badly and sadly faded historic slides being shown by Kit Grey-Wilson as part of a lecture on the genus. By way of compensation for us all, many of the same shots as taken in the wild were reproduced in their prime for Kit's published monograph (I have the 1989 edition): *DD. curviflora*, *diapensiifolia*, *hausknechtii*, *janthina* and *michauxii*. He also introduced ***Crocus scardicus*** that year.



The photo above was taken by Doug Joyce of a delighted [Alan Newton](#) with his plant of ***Dionysia curviflora*** which won him his first Farrer Medal when shown at the Loughborough AGS Show in March 2008. The photo of the plant at the show is by [Diane Clement](#). The species shows a lot of natural charm and is well displayed here with a rock surround, illustrating what a good plant for exhibition this species can make in the hands of a good grower. Ed.

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Not, of course, to neglect the most important of all, eponymous ***D. archibaldii***!

The plant was discovered by Jim in Iran in 1966 at high altitudes on Zardeh Kuh peak and though difficult to grow it has been maintained in cultivation. It was named in Jim's honour by the Norwegian botanist Per Wendelbo.



A plant named for Wendelboi, *Saxifraga wendelboi* Schönb.-Tem. (1967) photo Franz Hadacek

Above, left: ***Dionysia archibaldii*** photographed in Bakhtiari province of Iran in 2004 by Dieter and Rosi Zschummel. Forms and hybrids of the species seem more amenable to cultivation, such as this ***D. archibaldii*** 'Tora', grown by Robin Pickering and photographed by George Young at the SRGC/AGS Blackpool show of 2010.



Crocus scardicus introduced by JCA and grown by Harold Esslemont, still grown in Aberdeen by the Youngs over forty years later. Ed.

To speed up, a final superficial, short-changing cherry-pick here of the 80s onwards. It adds precision to my vague image of scads of salvias from Turkey. If known the year of collection is noted;

Alkanna aucheriana, *Draba cappadocica* (1984), *Campanula choruhensis* (1986), *C. troegerae* (1986), *Michauxia tchaihatcheffii* (1986), *Veronica oltensis* (1986) *Iris paradoxa* forma *mirabilis* (2000) and *I. urmiensis* (2000) are all from Turkey. ***Digitalis thapsi*** is a Spaniard from the 80s and *Campanula hawkinsiana* hails from Greece again. Saving the most Archibaldian of this group to last, their new species, ***Muscari mcbeathianum*** (1985), is another Turk. "And there's more where that came



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from”, for any who still remember catchphrases of [the Goons](#). Lots more. A recurring, shadowy, elusive image of show reports and plant awards flickers across my memory from numerous pages over the last few decades “ ... collected by Jim and Jenny Archibald in ...” But my inferiority complex is showing, so I’d better leave off tracing further goodies to list and put in a belated effort at trying to catch up with Jim’s lifetime achievements ...



Ramonda nathaliae JCA686 – a very fine large flowered form, grown and sold for many years by Jack Drake’s Inshriach nursery. Grown here to premium show quality by [David Millward](#), winning the Forrest Medal for the most meritorious plant at the Aberdeen SRGC show in 2008. This *Ramonda* is one of the first plants that two of your IRG Team (I & M.Y) bought from that nursery nearly forty years ago - a great plant then and now! Ed.

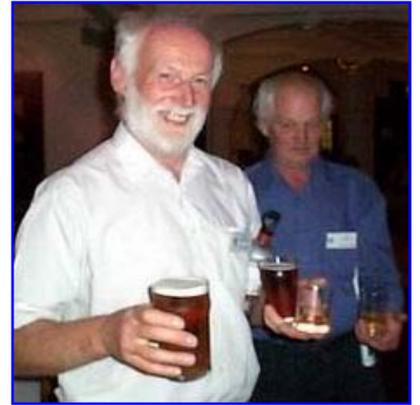
Given everything he contributed to our communal interests, is it reasonable to have hoped for even more? *Anything* more?

“It is a shame that Jim has not continued publishing his travel logs, such as those on Corsica and Morocco ... His daily journal about love of the land, people, and his freedom to see native plants seems idyllic ...” Bobby Ward, *The Plant Hunter’s Garden*: 24 (2004). Amen, say I, and probably very many others. That is a note of sorrowful, albeit selfish regret, not reproach. And who am I to complain, with so much of our own explorations in search of plants yet unwritten? But following those mouth-watering hors d’oeuvres of his, if only he had laid on main dishes to follow, written up as permanent memorials of his accomplishments, such as the hunt for dionysias, and the visit to the central Andes, and ... and ... Surely Jim must have experienced the odd dramatic or exciting event and suchlike now and again along the way to spice up the plantly bits, as we all have? I vaguely recall some news of a close shave involving the vehicle in Iran. There would surely be a market for a book on his exploits, should Jenny consider it.



Adonis vernalis, *Scilla morrisii*, *Cyclamen elegans* and *Galanthus transcaucasicus* : These have all been grown from Archibald seed by Vivienne Condon in Victoria, Australia who writes: “Jim and Jenny’s seed lists were very exciting and I could get all their wonderful plants that I cannot purchase in Australia. People say ‘how can you wait so long for a plant to flower’ - but it is all part of the process of growing plants from seed, from all the difficult places to visit in the world that I probably will never see. Thank you Jim for all the contributions you made to my Garden; so many wonderful plants.” V.C.

----International Rock Gardener----

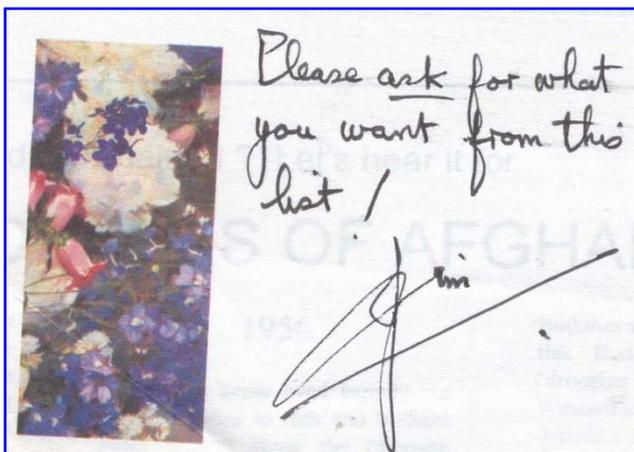


photos JIY

Muscari mcbeathianum
was found by Jim in Turkey
in 1985 at a site now lost to
livestock grazing. This plant

was named for [Ron McBeath](#) the great Scottish plantsman who holds awards from the Scottish Rock Garden Club, Alpine Garden Society and Royal Horticultural Society as well as the prestigious Scottish Horticultural Medal and Neill Medal of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society. Ed.

In the esoteric game of Hunt the Plant, which a few of us play as pros, it could be said that all paths lead to Farrer. Yet again, and not for the last time, that emblematic name crops up here, now in direct conjunction with Jim. The title of Jim's award-winning survey of sect. *Oncocyclus* irises, 'Silken, Sad, Uncertain Queens' [*Bull. Alp. Gard. Soc.* 67(3): 245-264] is drawn straight from *The English Rock Garden*. But its sober, highly informative, impeccably researched style, although lucidly written, contrasts dramatically with Farrer's literary extravaganzas. It also perhaps no less confounds prior expectations of Jim himself. There is none of the intimate immediacy of the early travel accounts, often tilting towards the lyrical. Nor does he unsheath the rapier of his controversial pamphleteering alter ego. This is his third style, and he is master of it, as of the other two. But the third is the most difficult and demanding by a long chalk. As I recently wrote to a friend, travelogues are easy meat by comparison. Other than identifying plants seen underway (which can simply be omitted if unnameable), and checking place names, it simply involves digging into the memory bank, abetted by photographic back-up. Anyone who has ever attempted a decent in-depth, objective review of a group of plants will know that genre requires exhaustive research, above all in relevant literature sources. Jim's survey of the *oncocyclus* section comfortably attained that yardstick, and stands as a model of a practical 'plantsman's monograph'. It exactly compliments strictly taxonomic accounts and usefully, one might dare to say authoritatively, contradicts them where experience in the field or from cultivation overrides with a more logical alternative interpretation. If only he had written a larger output in this vein, or far more preferably, had lived longer to record similar gems from his vast compendium of frequently unique experience. But not entirely at the expense of his wit and artist's vision, please.



A 'thank you' note from Jim for a seed swap with [Hans Joschko](#) of Mahlberg, Germany. This simple ***Paeonia officinalis*** from Archibald seed is one of many spectacular peonies in Hans' collection.

----International Rock Gardener----

This present appreciation of Jim, admittedly superficial and deficient as it is, presents him as 'plant hunter *extraordinaire*'. On reflection, maybe there's no such beast as an 'ordinary' plant hunter. Being extraordinary (some might even say eccentric) may well come inseparably with an activity Martyn Cheese and I once decried as: 'What a job for grown men!' It would hardly be surprising should our particular crust-earner not appeal to folks who consider themselves ordinary. At all events Jim **was** out of the ordinary, even by plant collectors' standards. Perhaps above all, no one in our sphere of innocent, jewel-like little flowers since Farrer (and who less *ordinaire* than he?) has proved the pen to be, if not mightier than the sword, then at least wickedly and controversially sharper – one hell of a sight sharper. That may be Jim's most obvious distinction, as opposed to achievement. But there were other outstanding factors.



Bob and Rannveig Wallis: growers, turned plant collectors and nursery folk.
photo [Cliff Booker](#)

It isn't difficult to compile a list of other collectors who began their careers by gardening, and became inspired to seek plants in the wild. In the same vein, nursery owners have sallied forth to collect for their established businesses. The Ingwersens, Clarence Elliott, Norman Stevens, **Bob and Rannveig Wallis**, Bleddyn and Sue Wynn-Jones and several intrepid types from North America and places once behind the Iron Curtain come easily to mind. But has anyone else bar Jim actually made *the first mark* as

a plant hunter, and then metamorphosed into a truly effective commercial grower?

(Metamorphosed is singularly appropriate for one so enamoured of Lepidoptera, as was Jim.) In fact that isn't even the full story, for rather than changing from one to the other, he managed the remarkable trick of adding the cultivation of his own and others' introductions to the curriculum while continuing a highly fruitful, if inevitably at times somewhat sporadic and uneasy marriage with his other discipline, collecting.

Alstroemeria magnifica* subsp. *maxima
grown from seed from an Archibald list by
[David Pilling](#) a keen bulb enthusiast.



That seems to me perhaps his greatest and most unique achievement. One final aspect stands out. Perhaps Jim hardly approached the almost Mozartian or Mendelssohnian precociousness of the said Reginald John Farrer, who 'knew his botany' by eight years old, had already had his first botanical paper published when a teenager, and was starting to establish his nursery while still up at Oxford. Looking for solid facts to record, I read through Jim's

accomplished accounts of his first two explorations, to Corsica and Morocco, the latter following almost frenetically on top of the former (a young man in a hurry!) [*Bull. Alp. Gard. Soc.* 31(3): 205.218, 31(4):314-340]. His recorded knowledge of the floras he encountered is deeply impressive.



More of Jim's seed selections- ***Albuca* sp. JCA 15856**, David Nicholson, UK; ***Crocus gilanicus***, Hendrik Van Bogaert, Belgium; ***Crocus niveus* JCA5312** Gerry Webster, UK.

----International Rock Gardener----

Although Jim and I began our very first field trips simultaneously in March 1962, the confident botanical field knowledge tripping off Jim's pen clearly outstrips my early amateurish stabs at identification. I had no inkling at the time he was a significant *five-plus years younger* than I. What a start for a mere stripling of twenty! What a continuation! And what a magnificently full career!

J.W.

----Other Memories of Jim ----

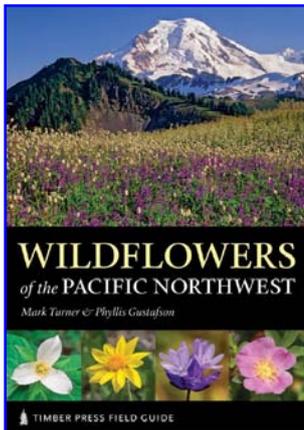


Phyllis Gustafson from Central Point, Oregon ran a small seed-collection business specializing in Northwest native plants and worked with native plants in the nursery trade for more than 20 years. She is the co-author, with [Mark Turner](#), of "[Wildflowers of the Pacific North West](#)" Here is her tribute to Jim:

"It was with great sorrow that we heard of the death of Jim. He was a great friend and both Richard and I loved having Jim and Jenny here in Oregon. Jim knew the Siskiyou like the back of his hand. We would go to some of his favourite places and he showed me where some of our special native plants grow. He kept meticulous notes and these are re-read when needed. When arriving at the site of some rare plant he and Jenny would walk up a slope or down a canyon and there the plant would be, behind a rock or tree or under a bush. We will miss their

happy voices on the phone and their visits. We have never met more cheerful and thoughtful people. I will always remember a trip with Jim, Jenny and [Boyd Kline](#) through some of the wildest parts of the Klamath Range. May the members of the wide alpine world grow as many as possible of the Archibald introductions to honour this marvellous man."

P.G.



Phyllis G.'s book cover



JY, Jenny Archibald and [John Amand](#).

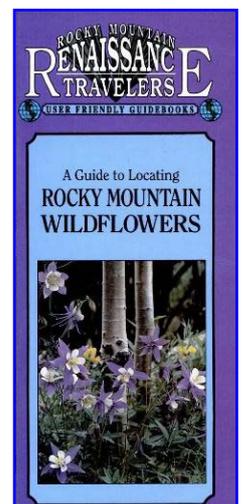


Digitalis thaspi photo [Bob Skowron](#)

---- Memories of Jim ----

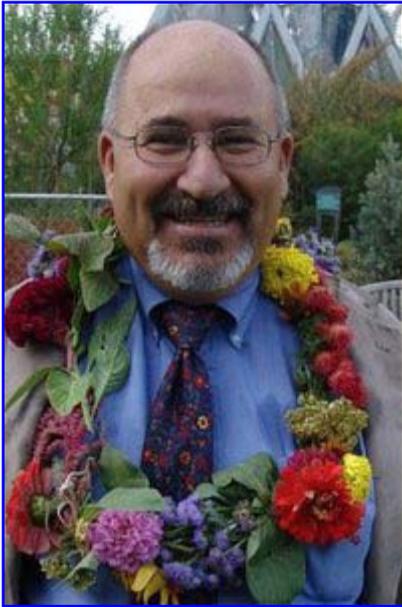
Panayoti Kelaidis is Senior Curator and Director of Outreach at [Denver Botanic Gardens](#), where he created the world-renowned Rock Alpine Garden. This affable chap is a consummate plantsman, something which shows itself in his writing, his enthusiasm for plant-hunting and all his many and varied projects. His [admiration and affection](#) for Jim Archibald knows no bounds. PK gives us an appreciation of Jim:

I first heard of Jim Archibald when my mentor, Paul Maslin, would return with enthusiastic reports about Buckshaw Gardens which he would visit on his annual pilgrimage to Britain back in the 1970's. I was awed to meet this slender Scotsman (already a hero to me) in Nottingham, where I was riveted by his presentation summarizing recent plant exploration. I found myself gravitating again and again to the booth Jim and Jenny staged in the Marquee at Alpines '81: they were among the few to be selling *Dionysia*, one of which bore his name. I was surprised a few years later to discover that the Archibalds gave up their nursery to become full time seed collectors: I treasure the dozens of their catalogues I accumulated over the following decades. These became a sort of serial Plantsman's Bible I read and re-read (much as I do Farrer only Jim was even wittier and less flowery).



----International Rock Gardener----

I was mightily grateful that Denver Botanic Gardens had budget enough back then to afford my hefty purchases.



As I look over these catalogues, with their long format and cipher-like numerical codings that precede Jim's unmistakable descriptions, I see how profoundly I have been influenced by this giant of 20th Century plant collecting. He opened my eyes to much of the wealth of the Mediterranean uplands, and taught me about their plants. We obtained innumerable plants that have formed the very basis of popular horticulture in the Semiarid American West: the Xeriscape movement would be far poorer without the half dozen *Digitalis* Jim and Jenny collected throughout the Mediterranean (*Digitalis thapsi* and *D. obscura* from them are mainstays of [Plant Select](#), an ambitious marketing programme I help manage. A dozen or more first rate *Salvia* and a bevy of *Campanula* are just a few that leap forth from the lists and our inventories tracing their heritage to the Archibalds. Not only have we obtained plants, Jim's copious cultural asides and habitat descriptions made growing these plants easier and enhanced how we use them in the garden.

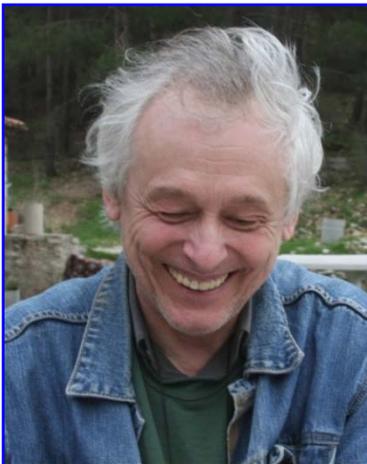
When one befriends a hero, one can fixate on their flaws or be somehow disappointed. The more I came to know Jim and Jenny, the more I was charmed by their steadfast partnership, their enormous good humour and fantastic knowledge of plants, people and cultures. I cannot express how despondent I was on hearing of his passing, and how profound my regret is that I did not spend even more time and even more money on his irreplaceable legacy. P.K.

“Gardening is not just a hobby; it's the main way we honor Planet Earth.”

-Panayoti Kelaidis, from his acceptance speech for the [AHS Liberty Hyde Bailey Award](#), 2009.

---- Memories of Jim ----

From [Jānis Rukšāns](#) in Latvia, author of '[Buried Treasures](#)' and plant hunter:



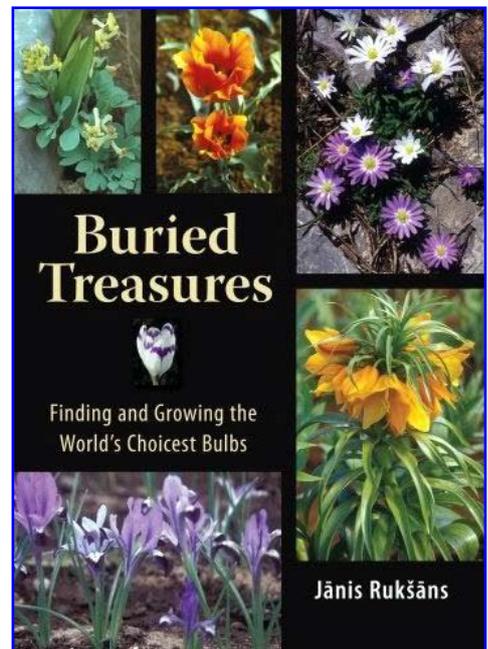
I have known Jim Archibald for many years. Since our first meeting at some Bulb Conference in the UK I have been fascinated by his knowledge and pictures of fantastic quality from many corners of our globe where only plants can grow. We very soon became close friends, exchanging plants and seeds.

Unfortunately we only once met in mountains before our last trip together to Georgia in spring of 2010 but we planned many more common adventures for future.

Fate has now decided otherwise. I'm really happy that I had opportunity to take part in our trip this year, the last for Jim. We talked a lot about his

visit to my place in the following spring, exchanged our experiences in bulb growing and impressions from our travels. We passed very long hours together on mountain slopes and Jim always generously showed me some unusual forms of plants and I helped him to collect some seeds for his seed lists. When the sad news came about his health, Jim hardly dared hope to live up to winter: he had so much to do. We were in frequent contact with Jim Archibald this summer. He sent me maps with marked spots where he had found plants to interest me.

After his passing I got a marvelous parcel from Jenny with around 150 samples of *Crocus* which Jim wanted me to have.



----International Rock Gardener----

He always will stay in my memory with his optimism, knowledge, involvement in gardening. And I'm happy that I named in his honour a new Crocus which will be published this winter in my coming monograph. As I was fearful that book would come out too late - in June I sent to Jim a printout of the pages with my description of this crocus.

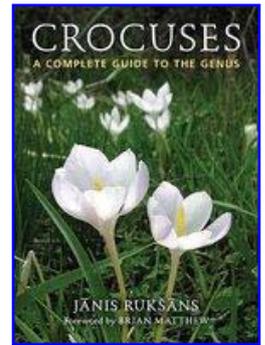


left: Jim Archibald in the Lagodekhi National Park, Georgia, Spring 2010

Here I will publish a small part, where this new Crocus is described, from [my coming book](#).

“THE SHOWY CROCUS”

Crocus speciosus M. Bieb., meaning “the showy crocus”, is the easiest and most widely grown species in gardens. Previously it was divided in three subspecies but the fourth one is described here. ***Crocus speciosus* subsp. *speciosus*** (2n = 8, 10, 12, 14, 18) is one of the very few autumn crocuses which have survived in my garden for many years without any care. In Holland it and its varieties are grown in huge numbers occupying many acres. It is very widespread in the wild, too, growing all around the Black Sea: starting from Crimea and encircling the Black Sea it stretches on through the Caucasus and northern Turkey into the province of Bolu where forms with exceptionally large flowers grow around Lake Abant.



right: *Crocus speciosus* Varhagni, Armenia photo JR

More to the west it is replaced by the somewhat similar but smaller *C. pulchellus*, but not long ago this species was found in a very disjunct location in the centre of Greece, very far from the other known populations. Eastwards *C. speciosus* enters northern Iran, where a very distinct form of this species grows which forms leaves in the autumn after the end of flowering. In Turkey it was also found quite far in a southerly direction. In the wild it grows in woods and on pastures or in alpine turf at altitudes from 800 to 2350 meters. I found it in the Crimea growing in very dense grass and under trees in clearings.

I came across the type subsp. *speciosus* for the first time some 30 years ago in Crimea in early September when I, together with my family, was enjoying the nice weather of the early autumn on the stony beach of the Black Sea - the so-called “velvet season” when the water is still warm enough to swim but the air is not as hot as in summer. Once I left my family and together with Dr. A. Yabrova from the [Nikitsky Botanical Garden in Yalta](#) went up to a ‘yaila’ in search of crocuses. The season had been very dry and *Crocus speciosus* had only started to flower but nevertheless I brought home a few corms.

Later it turned out to be the earliest flowering form of this species. Normally *C. speciosus* starts to flower here in September; this one always flowered in the boxes way ahead of the replanting time, already in the first days of August or even at end of July. Unfortunately all the stock was eaten by rodents and so I don't have it anymore. Actually it was the earliest of all the autumn crocuses, probably only ***Crocus scharojanii*** would have bloomed earlier but I didn't have this species at that time.

right: *Crocus scharojanii* photo JIY



----International Rock Gardener----

The next time I encountered *Crocus speciosus* was in Georgia just near Tbilisi where it grew in great abundance under pine trees within the city limits near [Lake Cherepash'ye](#). There were lots of bulbs growing around the lake. It proved to be a very well-known recreation area which we were able to reach even by a trolleybus. The trolleybuses stopped on a wide boulevard and there was a ski lift (not working) to the mountains and on the other side of the street - wide stairs made of stone that led to a monument on the mountain slope.



left: *Crocus speciosus* 'Oxonian' with dark purple tube
photo [Mark Smyth](#)

We quit the stairs very soon and went further along a foot-path higher up the mountains. With the first steps we noticed the first crocus leaves - it was *C. speciosus*. There I collected only a few corms of this crocus; they turned out to be an amazingly nice form that I later named 'Lakeside Beauty' - after the place where it was collected.

C. speciosus was growing everywhere and I can only imagine how beautiful these slopes were in autumn when crocuses were in full bloom. Definitely many beauties could have been picked up there. I visited this same place again 25 years later - in spring of 2007. Big changes had occurred there - the lakeside had low-trimmed grass, asphalted pass-roads, large stands and swimming lanes set up in the lake. And

surely there was nowhere even a single crocus leaf to be found any more, only a few weak *Muscari armeniacum* plants somewhere on the rocks.

right: *Crocus speciosus* subsp. *speciosus* from
Chatyr-dag, Crimea photo JR

Not long ago I again undertook a journey to the Crimea -this time in October and I went to Chatyr-dag Yaila with the intention to take some pictures of the wild *Crocus speciosus* for my coming Crocus book. There were plenty of them but as it is characteristic to this species it was growing only in shaded spots - near karst depressions covered by trees or in small islands of trees usually in quite dense grass. The weather was not favorable for picture taking; very low clouds were spread across the sky and from time to time there was drizzling rain.

Instead of crocuses I enjoyed the underground world - the Mramornaya (Marble) or Mammoth Cave - one of the largest karst caves in Europe; here the fossils of a mammoth's calf had been found and that is how the cave got one of its names. Only in the last morning before leaving the yaila for the airport the bright sun greeted us and I could take some pictures. Judging by the leaves *C. speciosus* had nowhere been as

abundant as near Lake Cherepash'ye in Georgia and later near Lake Abant in northern Turkey. At the latter spot crocus leaves in spring covered the ground under very shady hazelnut (*Corylus*) shrubs like grass. During my next visit the following spring to the Chatyr-dag Yaila I found that at lower altitudes in a beech forest in somewhat opener spots the leaves of *C. speciosus* covered the ground like green grass. Unfortunately the previous autumn I didn't find these spots.



----International Rock Gardener----

Below: Zhirair Basmajyan's *C. Speciosus* 'Pambak'



Flowers of *Crocus speciosus* are very variable in color but mostly they are in various shades of lilac and purple. I have never found white blooming plants in the wild and my Armenian friend and SRGC Forumist, [Zhirair Basmajyan](#) who specially examined many wild populations at my request, didn't find any either.

He wrote to me: "in Pambak area there are some variations of *C. speciosus* with very pale flowers, and even near white forms, which also have yellowish throat and creamy anthers but no one pure white comparable with Dutch cv. 'Albus'".

The very popular Dutch cultivar named 'Albus' is one of only two Dutch-raised cultivars of *C.*

speciosus that I grow at present. The other is the deepest purple form of this species ever seen by me - 'Oxonian'. It can be easily distinguished from other cultivars by its deep purple flower tube.

I grow a few cultivars raised by Zhirair Basmajyan : 'Cloudy Sky' (below left:JR) 'Goris' (below:by ZB)



Also several raised by one of my friends in Lithuania - Leonid Bondarenko -namely 'Late Love', 'Lithuanian Autumn' and 'Blue Web';

the latter is quite small but most beautifully veined with deep purple lines on a light blue ground.

There are some forms of subsp. *speciosus* in Armenia which looks like hybrids with *C. pulchellus* (both easily hybridize), but the last is growing very far from Armenia.



C. 'Late Love'



C. 'Blue Web'

photos JR

----International Rock Gardener----



left **C. 'LithuanianAutumn'** above **C. speciosus ssp. ilgazensis**

photos JR

From *Crocus speciosus* Brian Mathew separated two new subspecies. One originally collected on Ilgaz Dag in Turkey, he named ***Crocus speciosus* subsp. ilgazensis** B. Mathew ($2n = 6, 8$) and it is quite easy to recognize by the stigmatic branches which are less divided and usually are overtopped by anthers. The flowers of this subspecies are rather small comparing with other subspecies, and it is in fact a diminutive form of subsp. *speciosus*. It is a plant from alpine turf and stony hillsides or clearings in *Abies* forest where it grows on limestone formations at 1600 to 1750 metres. Unfortunately commercial growers do not always offer correctly named plants and then it is quite difficult to determine what is in front of you - a hybrid or a wider variation of what was expected. In these cases I check the position of anthers to the stigma.

The other subspecies is easier to identify because it has a deep yellow throat for which it is named



***Crocus speciosus* subsp. xantholaimos** B. Mathew ($2n = 10$) and in the wild it grows in a rather limited area in Sinop province on mountain passes in clearings of *Abies* and *Rhododendron* woods at the altitude around 1300 m near the coast of the Black Sea. It is a very nice plant with thinly papery corm tunics and quite indistinct basal rings. It has to be admitted that you can find plants with a yellow-coloured base in other populations of the type subsp. *speciosus*, too. I have seen such plants in Crimea and got several samples from Armenia. Doubtlessly, in the type subsp. *xantholaimos* the yellow colour is deeper, but this is quite relative - what one must regard as deep yellow and what - as only yellow, therefore the main feature is just the shape of the corm tunic.

In spring 2008 I collected a few corms of *Crocus speciosus* at several spots in western Iran to the north of the city of Zanzan at altitudes 1800 to 2100 metres. The plants for the first time bloomed with me in the autumn of 2008 and immediately attracted my attention with a very unusual for *C. speciosus* flower colour. The base colour on the outside of the outer tepals was white and the tepals were covered with wide lilac stripes from the base to the tips. When the flowers opened they had another surprise in store---the veining on the inside of the tepals was something (not exactly) similar to the other subspecies of *C. speciosus* only they had bright yellow base colour as in subsp. *xantholaimos* and the position of the anthers against the stigma and the branching of the stigma were the same as in subsp. *ilgazensis*. I got the last surprise a week after the end of flowering when the leaves started to grow, so it entered the winter with well-developed leaves whereas all the other *C. speciosus* samples didn't even show the tips of their leaves.

----International Rock Gardener----

After an exchange of information with Brian Mathew we both came to the conclusion that it was a new, not yet described, subspecies of *C. speciosus*. Thinking about the name of this new subspecies I decided to name it for the great explorers of bulbous and alpine flora - Jim and Jenny Archibald, who have introduced so many beautiful bulbs as well as crocuses through their seed



distribution company not only from Iran but from very distant countries as far as Patagonia in South America - as ***Crocus speciosus* subsp.**

***archibaldii*.**

(photo JR)

I collected the Iranian *C. speciosus* *sensu lato* in four localities; two samples were of the same appearance and characteristics as in subsp. *archibaldii*, but the other two looked like the traditional subsp. *speciosus*.

Comparing the leaves of all four gatherings in following spring, I found that in samples regarded as subsp. *speciosus* they were only half as wide (2-3 mm) as in samples of the new subsp. *archibaldii* (5-7 mm).

Description:

***Crocus speciosus* subsp. *archibaldii* Rukšāns, subsp. nov., subsp. *xantholaimos* (fauce intense lutea) et subsp. *ilgazensis* (antheras styli ramis aequus vel superans) similis sed foliis autumnalibus et flores colores ordinatione diversa (fasciatus non venosus) bone differt.**

Typus: Iran, Kuhha-ye Tales, between Nav and Khalkhal, steep mountain slopes just before pass, 2080 m. 2008-27-04, Rukšāns, WHIR-129 (GB, holo, ex culturae in Horto Jānis Rukšāns, flores 2008-09-15, folia et cormus 2008-10-20). **lc.:** *Crocuses: A Complete Guide to the Genus* (Portland, OR, 2010), plates 25 and 26. **J.R.**



A final note from Janis, from the SRGC Forum in August:

“I decided to give a cultivar name to one of the *Crocus* collected during our common trip in Turkey - ***Crocus hittiticus* 'Jim'**.”

Sleep in peace!

Janis”

And so say all of us.