

## ***COLCHICUM BALANSAE* (COLCHICACEAE), NEW TAXON FOR THE FLORA OF CRETE**

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### *Colchicaceae*

#### ***Colchicum balansae*** Planchon (1855)

S. Aegean: Crete: Nomos Irakliou - outskirts of Arkalochori, fallow fields with *Phlomis fruticosa* L., *Sarcopoterium spinosum* (L.) Spach, *Asphodelus ramosus* L., *Drimia numidica* (Jord. & Fourr.) J. C. Manning & Goldblatt, *Thapsia garganica* L., *Heliotropium hirsutissimum* Grauer, *Colchicum pusillum* Sieber, *Allium nigrum* L. etc., c. 420 m alt., 27.9.2022 (obs/photo).

**New for Crete.** *Colchicum balansae* is species endemic to S & SW Turkey and the E. Aegean Islands of Samos, Leros, Simi and Rodos (Dimopoulos et al. 2013, Alexiou 2013, Strid 2016). Our record is the first for Crete and Karpathos floristic region.

*Colchicum balansae* is remarkable for the extreme depth at which the corm occurs, making them 'inextricable' (Persson 1999). It is easily distinguished from other species by the combination of the following characters: tough and thick texture of the corm tunics, the length of the flower tube and styles and the pale flowers (Persson 1999). The species often reproduces vegetatively, producing small cormlets (Persson 1999). Cormlets produce only one, small leave and no flower, covering large areas.

On the 26.9.2022, the authors during a random field work at the area of Arkalochori, came across a large population of an unknown to them *Colchicum* species. The population, among the houses of the outskirts of Arkalochori, numbered several hundred plants. After fruitful conversation with relevant Facebook pages and naturalists it became evident that the species involved was *C. balansae*, a species never recorded before in Crete, an island that is considered well botanized. The new finding indicates the necessity for intense field work effort, even in areas that are considered well explored and especially in parts of the year not favoured by professional botanists.

With the new addition, the total number of *Colchicum* L. species recorded from Crete amount to five (Fielding & Turland 2005, Strid 2016), *C. cretense* Greuter, *C. cupanii* Guss. (incl. *C. cousturieri* Greuter), *C. macrophyllum* B.L.Burt, *C. pusillum* Sieber and *C. balansae* Planch.

*Colchicum balansae* new for Crete



Figs 1-2. *Colchicum balansae*, Arkalochori, Crete

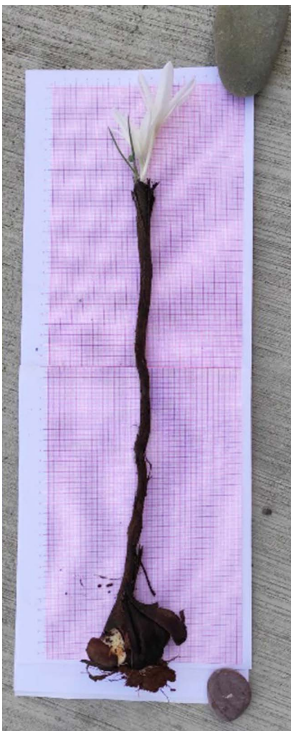


Fig. 3. *Colchicum balansae*, Arkalochori, Crete, whole specimen with c. 40 cm long tube and tunics.



Fig. 4. Map showing the known distribution of *Colchicum balansae* in Greece (dark dots) and the new locality (red dot).

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