

# Merendera attica (Liliaceae) in Spain

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## Merendera attica (Liliaceae) in Spain

B. E. SMYTHIES & BRIAN MATHEW

### Résumé

Smythies, B. E. & B. Mathew (1976). *Merendera attica* (Liliaceae) en Espagne. *Candollea* 31: 243-245. En anglais.

Les deux nouvelles stations découvertes dans la Serranía de Ronda (Province de Málaga) sont notablement éloignées de l'aire de répartition de l'espèce telle qu'elle était connue jusqu'ici et qui comprenait l'Anatolie et le sud-est des Balkans.

### Abstract

Smythies, B. E. & B. Mathew (1976). *Merendera attica* (Liliaceae) in Spain. *Candollea* 31: 243-245. French abstract.

The two new localities discovered in the Serranía de Ronda (Málaga province) lay far off the previously known distribution range of the species, comprising Anatolia and the S.E. Balkans.

*Merendera attica* (Spruner ex Tommasini) Boiss. & Spruner, Diagn. Pl. Or. Nov. 5: 67. 1844. — Fig. 1-6.  
= *Colchicum atticum* Spruner ex Tommasini in Flora 23/2: 730. 1840.

The genus *Merendera* is primarily Asiatic in distribution, with several species in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and adjacent areas of Russia (fig. 7). Of the five European species only three produce flowers in spring, the other two being entirely autumn-flowering.

They are: *M. attica*, which is very common in western Turkey and in Greece in the vicinity of Athens. This has a long flowering period, depending on habitat, in autumn and spring from November to March. *M. rhodopaea* Velen. which is very similar and may well be conspecific with the preceding, from southern Bulgaria. *M. sobolifera* C. A. Meyer, which differs in having a slender, horizontal, elongated corm and appendages at the base of the perianth segments. This is mainly west-asiatic but also occurs in the Balkans.

In western Europe the genus was previously thought to be represented only by the two strictly autumn-flowering species, *M. montana* (L.) Lange and *M. filifolia* Camb., which possess basifixed anthers, not dorsifixed as in the other species. It is therefore of great interest to record the discovery of a spring *Merendera*, apparently conspecific with *M. attica*, in Spain. The data is as follows: Serranía de Ronda, prov. Málaga (UF-16<sup>1</sup>), 19.3.1972, *Smythies 633* (LTR).

<sup>1</sup>UF-16: Co-ordinates of a 10 km square of the U.T.M. (Universal Transverse Mercator) grid, used in the topographic sheets of the "Mapa militar de España" and by the "Atlas florae europeae".

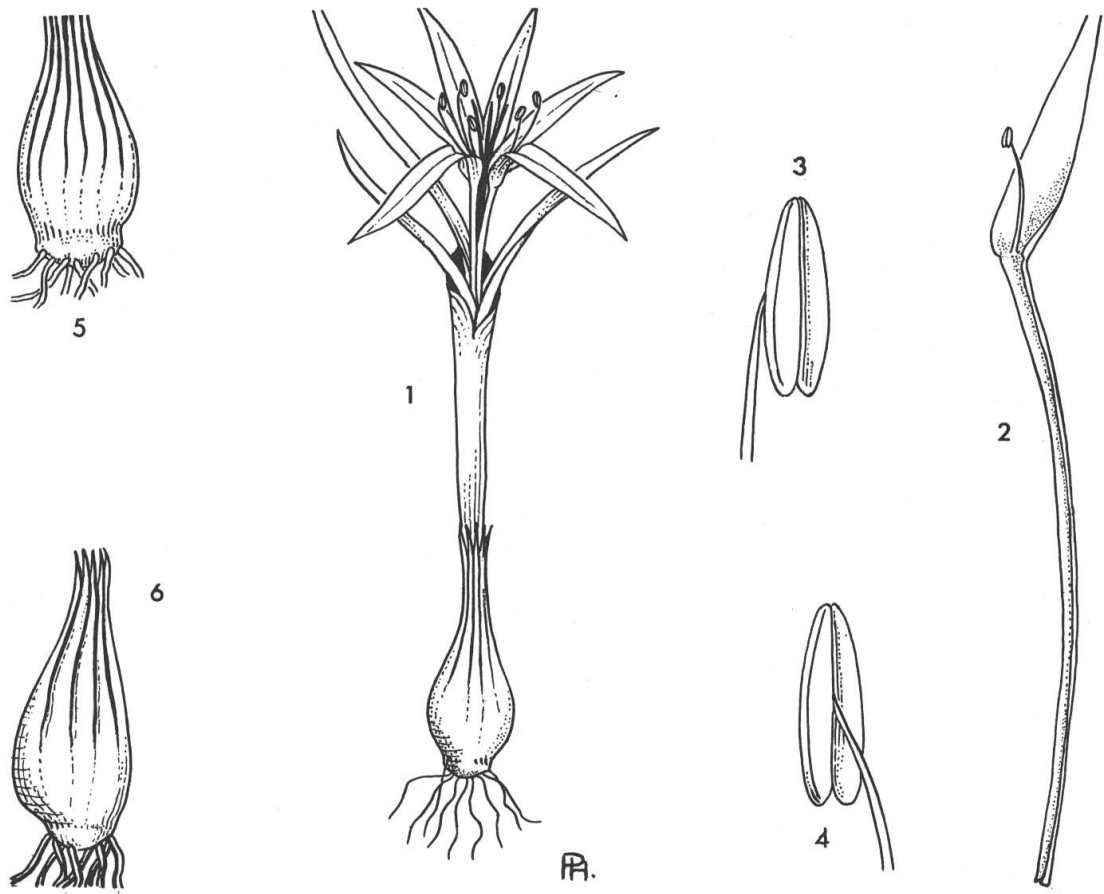


Fig. 1-6. — *Merendera attica*.  
 1, habit  $\times 2/3$ ; 2, perianth segment  $\times 1$ ; 3, anther (front)  $\times 8$ ; 4, anther (back)  $\times 8$ ; 5, corm  $\times 1$ ;  
 6, corm (side view)  $\times 1$ .



Fig. 7. — Distribution map of *Merendera attica* showing the new locality in Spain and the more widespread localities in Greece and Turkey.

This herbarium material was collected by Smythies during an excursion to the Serranía de Ronda with Mrs. Rosemary Strachey and the late Mr. James Caffery. A small colony, consisting of widely scattered plants covering an area of about half a hectare, was found in flower at 900 m on a scrub-covered limestone hillside with a few scattered small trees of *Quercus rotundifolia*. There was no habitation or cultivation near the colony. It was examined again on 11.4.1974 with Mr. Richard Gorer, when one plant was still in flower but the rest had finished flowering. A second colony, about 5 km west of the first one, was found by Mrs. Strachey in flower at the end of February 1976; it resembled the first colony in size, altitude and habitat.

These plants bear no resemblance to *M. montana* (*M. bulbocodium*), the common autumn-flowering species in Spain; superficially they look more like *Androcymbium gramineum* (Cav.) Macbride. The herbarium material could not be identified locally and was therefore forwarded to Kew. The corm was detached from the specimen and planted and it has flowered annually since 1974, retaining its spring-flowering characteristic. It has been compared with living material of *M. attica* from Greece and Turkey, the only visible difference being that the anthers are fractionally shorter in the Spanish material. However, the measurements are so close that the age of the anthers could account for this variation, since they shorten as they dehisce and wither. The corms of both east and west plants are nearly identical in their tunics, these sometimes being a useful distinguishing feature between taxa in *Colchicum* and *Merendera*. The tunics are nearly black, rather coriaceous and with distinct vertical ribs. Chromosome studies of the various populations of *M. attica* have not been made and these might be of interest, but there is little doubt that the Spanish plant represents a new record for *M. attica*.

