

Discovering new localities of a rare species in Georgia

March 24 2011



Cyclamen colchicum

The Millennium Seed Bank Partnership team in Georgia made an exciting discovery in October last year when local nature lovers alerted the team to the presence of cyclamen in a district in West Georgia.

As soon as the MSB team saw a photo, they suspected the plant could be the rare *Cyclamen colchicum*, although the species had never been recorded from the district mentioned.

Cyclamen colchicum is an endemic species of West Georgia and

extremely important in terms of the investigation of the [evolutionary history](#) of the endemic calciphilous flora of Colchis. Its medicinal properties have been mentioned in ancient texts. Populations are now declining in the wild. It is likely that this plant is extensively collected for its medicinal and ornamental properties. In recent years the MSBP team have recorded the absence of target plants from several sites known previously to support the species.

The team had funding for fieldwork provided by the Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation, and so decided to go visit immediately to catch the cyclamen in flower. On 8 October the team from the Tbilisi [Botanical Garden](#) and Institute of Botany (Tsira Mikatadze-Pantsulaia, David Kikodze, Tinatin Barblishvili, Manana Khutsishvili and Sandro Kolbaia) headed to West Georgia to meet the local enthusiasts, Roman Tolordava, Temgiz Karchava and Lado Tolordava. The plants were found across several sites, on almost vertical dolomitic limestone crevices, and were for sure *Cyclamen colchicum*, with its typical leaves and fragrant flower. Luckily the populations are fertile and fruit set is good. In 2011 seed will be collected from these populations and stored at the Seed Bank of the Caucasus in Tbilisi and used to grow plants in the Tbilisi Botanical Garden.

Provided by Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

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