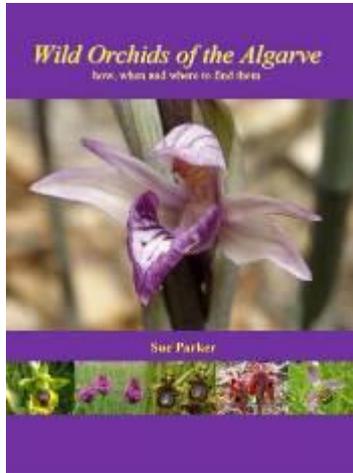


Wild Orchids of the Algarve: how, when and where to find them

by Sue Parker



ISBN: 978-0-9560544-8-7; 128 pages, full colour, Hardback binding.

"An essential guide for anyone interested in southern Europe's wild orchids, this beautifully-illustrated authoritative guidebook encapsulates the experience of 16 years of conscientious on-location searching, study and research in southern Portugal's famous Algarve region."

Despite its small geographical area, Portugal's Algarve region is home to at least 1500 native wildflower species including more than 30 wild orchids. For tourists and residents alike these are major attractions of the very varied Algarve countryside.

For newcomers in particular, wild orchids can be hard to find and even harder to identify. *Wild Orchids of the Algarve* solves these problems, providing easy-to-follow introductions to the biology and habitats of orchids, and explaining in non-scientific language why the Algarve is such a special place.

More than 200 colour photographs of the orchids, both in their natural settings and as stunning close-up pictures of their flowers, ensure that readers will be able to identify the orchids they find on countryside rambles.

An illustrated Table of Contents and a pictorial Glossary of Botanical Terms make this a uniquely accessible guidebook.

Written by author and broadcaster Sue Parker, this first ever comprehensive guide to the wild orchids of the Algarve is based on 16 years of research and photography in the Algarve region of southern Portugal.

Review comments by orchid experts:

'A comprehensive guide to the orchids specific to the Algarve with notes on occurrence and identification. The photographic material is excellent – people will undoubtedly be able to identify the orchids they find using this book.' Dr. Finn Rasmussen.

'A great achievement' – Dr. Chris Thorogood, author of *Field Guide to the Wildflowers of the Algarve*.

'Congratulations on your marvellous and complete book about Algarve Orchids'. Américo Pereira, Orquideas Soltas

More about this book

- A superbly illustrated, authoritative guide to the wild orchids that are known to occur in the Algarve
- Written and illustrated by a naturalist with sixteen years' of orchid hunting experience in the Algarve region
- A guide to the range of Algarve habitats from seashore to mountain top
- More than 200 beautiful photographs of wild orchids, including plant-in-habitat and flower close-up pictures
- The orchid hunter's guide to the Algarve's best sites and walks
- Packed with fascinating facts about orchid biology, photographic tips and advice for newcomers to orchid hunting

This book also includes an illustrated identification guide to each of the Algarve's wild orchids, with scientific names and (where they are in common use) English names and Portuguese names.

About the Author



Naturalist Sue Parker's fascination with orchids stems from her childhood in the Far East. The colourful wildflowers growing over her garden fence in Singapore were the kind of exotic orchids that many people in Europe now have in pots on windowsills. The search for wild orchids has taken Sue to many countries; but, as she says, there is a special satisfaction in finding and identifying beautiful orchids close to home – and for the past 16 years Sue's home in Carvoeiro has been a base for studying the Algarve's wonderful wildflowers and, in particular, its wild orchids. (Sue also has a home in Wales, which serves as her main 'writing' base.)

An active conservationist, Sue is the author of 12 books and several dozen articles on wildlife and countryside topics; she is well known in the Algarve for her column on Sustainable Living, which is published monthly in the Algarve Resident newspaper. Sue's introductory guide *'Wild Orchids in the Algarve'* has been one of the Algarve's bestsellers since it was published in 2009. This new book, covering many more species and providing a wealth of additional information on top orchid sites, walks and much more, is surely destined to become an essential handbook for Algarve residents and visitors alike. Sue produced and maintains the [Algarve Wildlife](#) website whose pages are visited nearly 200,000 times a year.

Sample pages

Wild Orchids of the Algarve

Orchid taxonomy and naming

Plants, animals and other living organisms are given scientific names using what is now known as the binomial system. In this system, which was formally introduced by Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus in 1753, each species is given a unique two-part name. For example the Man Orchid is *Ophrys anthropophora* (right). By tradition, binomial names are written in italics with the first part, known as the genus name, capitalised; the second part, the specific 'epithet', is always written using lower-case letters.



Rather than using their native languages it has been traditional for botanists to use mainly Latin or Greek words as the basis of naming. Occasionally plants are named in honour of famous naturalists, whose names in 'abbreviated' form appear either in a genus name or more often as the specific epithet. For example *Epipactis hemslali* honours the Catalan botanist Frederic Hemslali (Borrell), who first recorded and described this orchid species. Most specific epithets describe a particular characteristic of a plant species. For example in *Ophrys speculum* the specific epithet means 'mirror' and refers to a reflective bluish patch on the lip of this orchid; while in *Epipactis palustris* the specific epithet refers to the habitat – marshy land – in which these plants grow.

Family: **More distantly related** Orchidaceae

Genus: Orchis Ophrys Serapias Other genera...

Species: Ophrys *speciosa* Ophrys *lucida* Ophrys *lutea* Other Ophrys species

Subspecies: Ophrys *lutea* subsp. *gallica* Ophrys *lutea* subsp. *idea* Other subspecies

More closely related

Taxonomic ranks within the Orchidaceae

20

PART I – The Algarve and its Wild Orchids

Orchids that have many general characteristics in common are placed in the same genus, but they may differ in specific details. As of 2014 there are 21 accepted *Ophrys* species in the World Checklist of Selected Plant Families (WCSP). Groups of related genera are allocated to botanical families, whose names end in *-aceae*. All of the world's orchids belong to one family, the Orchidaceae. (Plant family names are not italicized.) Within the Orchidaceae there are nearly 800 genera, together containing some 20,000 known species. Related families are grouped into classes, related classes into divisions and so on. These hierarchical groups, or taxa, are botanists' best guesses at how the present diversity of plants evolved from one or a few distant ancestors. Originally these guesses were based on visible features, mainly physical forms (morphology), but in recent years use of DNA analysis to evaluate likely evolutionary relationships between taxa has created changes in definition of some established genera, making it more difficult to use old and new literature simultaneously.



Many plants have been transferred from one genus to another, some genera have been split up and others merged, as botanists determine with more confidence how various species are related to one another. An example of this change affecting an orchid species that occurs in the Algarve is the move of the Green-winged Orchid (formerly *Ophrys mono*) to the *Anacamptis* genus with the resulting name change to *Anacamptis mono*.

Despite many such name changes, the basic structure of the binomial system has been preserved, enabling those with an interest in the natural world to be confident that each scientific name refers to just one and the same species in any country in the world. The International Code of Nomenclature (ICN) for algae, fungi and plants, established in 1906, is updated every six years. If a plant's taxonomic position is changed, the binomial name also has to be amended.

From *Orchis mono* to *Anacamptis mono* – the Green-winged Orchid has changed genus.

Changes to plant names can cause confusion when you consult a guide book to determine which species you have found. The book may quote one of several names – so-called synonyms that have arisen either when a species has been moved between genera or because botanists in different places named a plant unaware that it had already been described scientifically and named elsewhere.

Using synonyms is not strictly wrong, but the currently preferred name of an orchid species can be found by consulting either an up-to-date field guide or an online list of plant names (see page 124).

21

Wild Orchids of the Algarve

Heart-flowered Tongue Orchid *Serapias cordigera* serapião-de-flores-grandes

With its large colourful flowers *Serapias cordigera* is generally considered the most spectacular of the Algarve's tongue orchids.

Identification

This is a robust plant, growing to a height of around 40cm. Its thick stem is clasped at the base by 4 – 9 narrow pointed leaves. The upper leaves are bract-like and shorter than the hoods of the flowers.

Each inflorescence carries 3 – 20 large flowers, whose hoods are pinkish grey and veined with dark orange to purple. Broad, heart-shaped, and veined with darker orange or red, the lip, from which this orchid gets its common name, has a patch of dense hairs running down its centre.

In paler-flowered specimens the hairs on the lip are much lighter, but with darker-flowered plants, the hairs range from dark red to purple. At the centre of the base of the lip there are two dark, shiny spots which are sometimes visible from the outside once the flowers open fully.



Heart-flowered Tongue Orchids in a damp meadow near Odessaie

54

PART II – Guide to the Orchid Species

Distribution

Serapias cordigera is uncommon, and although sometimes occurring in sizeable groups it is very much a localised orchid and mainly seen in central and western parts of the region. There are large but localised populations of this orchid in parts of Italy and southern France, and its range extends southwards into North Africa and westwards to the Azores.

Habitat and flowering time

Occasionally growing in full sun in moist meadows, the Heart-flowered Tongue Orchid is most often found in the semi-shade of pine woods and sometimes with cork oaks, more often on acidic rather than calcareous soils. *Serapias cordigera* blooms in April and May in the Algarve.

Possible confusion

It is difficult to mistake the Heart-flowered Tongue Orchid for any of the other tongue orchids in the Algarve because of the robust form of the plant and its much larger flowers. As with *Serapias lingua* subsp. *duriana*, however, this plant is sometimes misidentified as *Serapias vomeracea*, a species which may occur in the Algarve.



Typical flowers of *Serapias cordigera*



Paler specimens of *Serapias cordigera* are recorded by some botanists as *Serapias cordigera* subsp. *gallica*.

55

Note: compared to the printed book, image and text quality seen here are greatly reduced.