

# Russia



Members of the Russian Federation, including Adygeya, Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachevo-Cherkessi, North Ossetia, Krasnodarskiy, and Stavropol'skiy Krai, occupy the North Caucasus. The region contains 3,700 plant species, with ca. 280 national and ca. 1,300 Caucasian endemics. Mt. Bol'shaya Khatipara [above] in the Teberda Reserve is covered with snow during most of the year.



*Crocus scharojanii* Rupr. (VU) [left], which comes into flower in late summer, occurs in many parts of the Caucasus and is especially abundant in Teberda.



The genus *Thymus* is represented by 25 species in the flora of the Caucasus. *Thymus pulchellus* C.A. Mey. (EN) [above left] is exceptional in having erect stems and large flowers. *Asphodeline tenuior* (Bieb.) Ledeb. (VU) [above right] beautifies rocky slopes and taluses at 600-800 m.



# Turkey



The Lesser Caucasus Mountains and refugial Colchis flora extend westward into Turkey. The Turkish portion of the Caucasus contains about 2,500 plant species, with 210 national and 750 regional endemics. *Salix rizeensis* Güner & Ziel. (EN) [above] is found in pastures around Trabzon and Rize, usually along streams, at 2,000-3,000 m elevation.

Asteraceae is one of the largest families in the Caucasus.



*Grossheimia helenioides* (Boiss.) Sosn. & Takht. (EN) [left] is named after the famous Russian botanist Alexander A. Grossheim.



This long-flowered poppy, *Papaver lateritium* C. Koch subsp. *lateritium* (VU) [above left], is becoming very rare in areas where it occurs in Ardahan, Artvin, Erzerum, Rize, and Tabzon. An extremely rare Asteraceae is *Senecio integrifolius* (L.) Clairv. subsp. *karsianus* Matthews (EN) [above right].



# The Caucasus Biodiversity Hotspot

Because of the great diversity and rarity of their floras, the nations of the Caucasus have initiated a project to prepare a Red Book of endemic plants of the region in collaboration with the Missouri Botanical Garden and the World Conservation Union (IUCN), and with the support of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF).

The Caucasus region lies between the Black and Caspian Seas and is the meeting point of Europe and Asia. The region is well known from Greek mythology: the Argonauts searched for the Golden Fleece there. According to the Bible, Mt. Ararat was the resting place for Noah's Ark.



The vegetation of the Caucasus is remarkably diverse, ranging from alpine meadows to montane conifer forest to arid shrublands and semi-deserts. Of about 6,300 species of vascular plants, ca. 2,500 are endemic to the region.



Many food crops were domesticated in the Caucasus. Some species of wheat still occur in the wild in the region. Grapes were brought into cultivation 7,000 years ago and, since then, both fruits and wine have become important products.



MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN

<http://www.mobot.org/MOBOT/Research/caucasus/caucasus.shtml>



# Armenia



Armenia occupies the southern part of the Caucasus. Its flora includes 3,500 species, with 125 national and 850 Caucasian endemics. The mountains in Armenia are more open than those in many other areas of the Caucasus, with exposures of bare, rocky ground. The photo above shows part of the Zangezur region.



Close to the snowline, magnificent alpine and subalpine meadows thrive, some containing expanses of *Anemonastrum fasciculatum* (L.) Holub (VU) [above].



*Rhododendron caucasicum* Pall. (VU) [left] is an evergreen shrub characteristic of the high mountains of the Caucasus in subalpine and alpine zones.

# Azerbaijan



Azerbaijan occupies the southeastern part of the Caucasus. Its flora includes 4,500 species, with 200 national and 950 Caucasian endemics. Sheki [above] is in the northwestern part of Azerbaijan at the foot of the Greater Caucasus and borders agricultural land and natural landscape in the Zakataly Reserve.



Most vegetation types in the southeastern Caucasus closely resemble those in neighboring Iran. *Tulipa eichleri* Regel (VU) [above left] is found in the steppes of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Iran. *Lilium ledebourii* (Baker) Boiss. (CR) [above center] is a gem of the genus, occurring in Talysh (southeastern Azerbaijan) and Iran. *Sternbergia colchiciflora* Waldst. & Kit. var. *alexandrae* (Sosn.) Artjush. (CR) [above right] beautifies the Absheron Peninsula in very early spring, when just a few plants come into flower.



*Iris camilla* Grossh. (CR) [left], one of the most beautiful species of the genus, occurs around Qazangöl Lake. Flower color can vary widely, and 16 forms have been described.

# Georgia



Georgia is situated in the southwestern portion of the region bordering the Black Sea between the mountains of the Greater Caucasus to the north and the Lesser Caucasus to the south. Its flora includes 4,130 species, with 270 national and 1,250 Caucasian endemics. Large portions of the mountains are covered with forest. In the ancient Colchis (southwestern Georgia), precipitation reaches about 5,000 mm per year, supporting a lush forest full of relictual and endemic species.



There are about 12 species of *Paeonia* in the Caucasus with flowers ranging from bright red to yellow and white. *Paeonia wittmanniana* Hartw. ex Lindl. (VU) [left] is one of the large-flowered species.

A number of snowdrops occur in the Caucasus region, where they begin to bloom in early February. Endemic *Galanthus woronowii* Losinsk. (VU) [below] is found in the coastal area along the Black Sea and in adjacent regions.



*Iris winogradowii* Fomin (CR) [above] is a narrow endemic known from only four small localities in Georgia.