

General

In this leaflet we introduce the **national plant of Cyprus (the Cyprus cyclamen: *Cyclamen cyprium*)**, designated as such by decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic on 1 February 2006, following a proposal submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment and a recommendation of the Department of Forests.

The need to specify a national plant

In reality there are no special reasons for a country to specify a national plant or national tree. It is rather a cultural and communication feature, since most countries in the world have specified such

national symbols. Indeed, some countries have specified a national bird and /or animal. Each country follows different procedures for the selection of these symbols, depending on the various cultures, the legislation and the expectations of the people in the respective country.

In some countries the procedure entails a sample referendum or questionnaire, in some other places it is carried out following consultations and approval by the parliament or even with a presidential decree. This action is, therefore, mostly a formality but it has at the same time an ecological, cultural and often historic significance.

Selection criteria

The selection of the national plant of Cyprus was carried out following consultations, both with other competent state services as well as private researchers of the Cyprus flora. The main criteria and prerequisites taken into consideration for the selection of the national plant were:

- to be an indigenous plant and preferably an endemic plant of Cyprus

- the botanical identity of the plant should be clarified
- it should not be specified as a national plant of another country
- it should have ecological, aesthetic, historic and scientific significance
- the plant should be known to the public and preferably be relatively widespread

The Cyprus cyclamen meets all the criteria set out above, since it is endemic to the island, known to the public and it is spread out from the region of Akamas to the Troodos mountain range and the Pentadaktylos mountain range. It can also be easily cultivated and it is a very attractive plant.

THE NATIONAL PLANT

The endemic Cyprus cyclamen (*Cyclamen cyprium* Kotschy), has been designated as the national plant of Cyprus.

Nomenclature

The generic name *Cyclamen* is cognate with the Greek Cyclos, "a circle", and refers either to the round tuber or the rounded leaves, or possibly the circular twisting of the fruiting peduncle. The species has been named *cyprium*, because its description was based on specimens collected from Cyprus, where the plant is endemic.

Description

Cyprus cyclamen is a perennial, tuberous herb 7-15 cm high. It has simple, cordate, rather fleshy leaves, which have long petioles and coarsely dentate margins. The lower surface of lamina has a characteristic rich purple or crimson-purple colour. The flowers are solitary, nodding, on long pedicels; the corolla is deeply 5-lobed, white or pale pink, with a conspicuous M-shaped magenta blotch towards the base of each lobe. The sweetly fragrant flowers appear in autumn, usually a little in advance of the leaves. Soon after anthesis, the pedicels start coiling from apex downwards and a globose capsule appears on each pedicel.



Habitat – Distribution

It grows on shaded calcareous or igneous rocks, steep hillsides and streambanks, usually under trees and shrubs from 50 to 1 200 m above sea level. It flowers from September to January, and exceptionally flowering can be prolonged to March.

Cyprus cyclamen is the only endemic of the three species of the genus *Cyclamen* (*Cyclamen persicum*, *C. graecum*), which are indigenous in Cyprus. It occurs in the greater part of the island (except the

central plain), from the Akamas peninsula and the Troodos range to the Pentadaktylos range, and it is locally abundant.

Protection status

All *Cyclamen* species are listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Moreover, the largest populations of *Cyclamen cypricum* are found in state forest land and are thus well protected.



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The National Plant of Cyprus



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