

Return of the Flora Graeca

From 1786-87, John Sibthorp and Ferdinand Bauer accomplished an admirable scientific and physical achievement. From their journey through Greece and western Turkey, they brought home about 1000 sketches that served as the basis of the *Flora Graeca*.

Sibthorp had to rely on the help of herders, farmers and monks. He used a copy of the work of Dioscorides, who had founded botany 1,700 years before. Sibthorp showed the drawings of Dioscorides to locals, and they led him to the sites where they could be found.

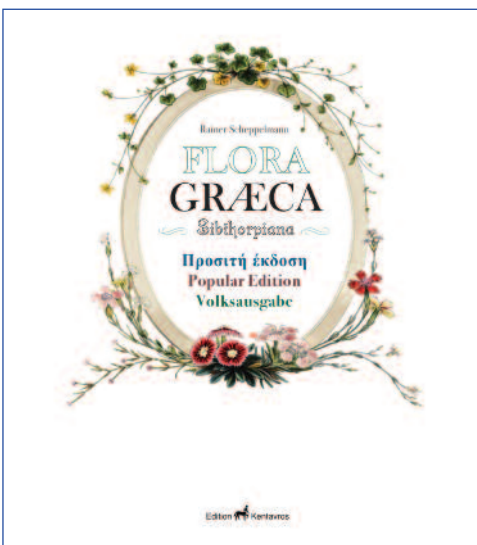
In Greece, Ferdinand Bauer sketched the plants and provided his drawings with colour codes, which he later used to colour the pictures. The result was one of the most important works in the history of botany: 10 volumes, each with 100 pictures of the rich flora of Greece.



Der Autor mit Originalband 7 der *Flora Graeca*



Nerium Oleander



Cover sheet of the Popular Edition

The book had only one shortcoming: the public ended up never seeing the work, and less the Greek public. Given its high price, a total of only 60 copies were published. They disappeared in libraries and private collections, and were up to now only accessible to specialists.

We must admit that Sibthorp did not act as reprehensibly as a contemporary of his, Lord Elgin, who took sculptures from the Acropolis in Athens to later sell them to the British Museum. However, from a contemporary perspective, to make the *Flora Graeca* accessible to the Greek public as well would have been something akin to a moral commitment for Sibthorp.

However, Sibthorp was an excellent scientist, but as a wealthy man, he was also a child of his time. He was mainly concerned with science and personal reputation. That people without academic credentials should have access to his work was beyond his imagination.

In recent years, the mystery of the *Flora Graeca* has been uncovered somehow. In 2007, Oxford University published a very readable book about the genesis of the *Flora Graeca* with numerous original drawings (Harris, 2007). With a price of 900 Euros, the facsimile edition of 2009 remains too expensive for ordinary people (Strid, 2009).

The present book is based on scans from private collections. Our 250 drawings (of originally 900) show the plants that are most widespread throughout Greece nowadays.

We have called it a “popular edition” on purpose. We follow the tradition of popular editions of the late 19th century and early 20th century, when scientific works were offered in an understandable-language, and at an affordable price.

By this, the *Flora Graeca* is returning to Greece without Greece having demanded its restitution.

Rainer Scheppelmann: *Flora Graeca* (Edition Kentavros), Hardcover, 244 p, 270 ill., 24.80€

Order it at www.edition-kentavros.eu Shipping within the EU is free. From outside Europe: 8€
Contact: rainer.scheppelmann@hamburg.de



Cistus creticus

Cistus creticus. In Creta, et Archipelagi insulis
Kretische Zistrose. Auf Kreta und den ägäischen Inseln
Pink Rock-Rose. In Crete and the Aegean Islands
Λαδανιά. Στην Κρήτη και στα νησιά του Αιγαίου

100cm	12-7	☀	▲▲▲
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Punica granatum. In Graecia, insulisque Archipelagi, tam sylvestris quam culta, frequens
Granatapfel. In Griechenland und den ägäischen Inseln, sowohl wild als auch als Kulturpflanze häufig
Pomegranate. In Greece and the Aegean islands, often, both wild and as cultivated plant
Ροιδιά. Στην Ελλάδα και στα νησιά του Αιγαίου, συχνά σαν άγριο και σαν καλλιεργούμενο φυτό

5m	4-6	☀	▲▲
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Spartium junceum. In collibus siccis per totam Graeciam, nec non in Archipelagi insulis, frequens
Spanischer Ginster. Häufig auf trockenen Hängen in ganz Griechenland und auch auf den ägäischen Inseln
Spanish broom. Frequently on dry slopes in Greece, and on the Aegean islands
Σπάρτο. Συχνά σε ξηρές πλαγιές στην Ελλάδα, και στα νησιά του Αιγαίου

3m	4-6	☀	▲▲
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