

3. CROCUS Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1: 36. 1753.

番红花属 fan hong hua shu

Herbs small, perennial, cormous. Corms oblate, covered with a tunic. Leaves few, all basal, green, linear, adaxially with pale, median stripe, base surrounded by membranous, sheathlike leaves. Aerial stem not developed. Flowers emerging from ground, with peduncle and ovary subterranean. Perianth white, yellow, or lilac to dark purple; tube long, slender; segments similar, equal or subequal. Stamens inserted in throat of perianth tube. Style 1, slender, distally with 3 to many branches. Capsule small, ellipsoid or oblong-ellipsoid.

About 80 species: C and W Asia, Europe, Mediterranean region; two species (one introduced) in China.

- 1a. Perianth purple; style 3-branched at apex, branches deep red, 2.5 cm or more; plants cultivated 2. *C. sativus*
1b. Perianth white, striped or spotted gray or blue abaxially; style 3-lobed at apex, lobes white to deep yellow, short; plants wild 1. *C. alatavicus*

1. *Crocus alatavicus* Semenov & Regel in Regel & Herder, Bull. Soc. Imp. Naturalistes Moscou 41(1): 434. 1868.

白番红花 bai fan hong hua

Corms 1.2–2 cm in diam.; tunic yellowish brown, membranous. Leaves 6–15, 8–10 cm × ca. 2 mm at anthesis, ca. 20 cm × 5 mm in fruit. Flowers fragrant. Perianth white with yellow center, striped or spotted gray or blue abaxially; tube 2.5–6 cm; segments narrowly oblanceolate, outer ones ca. 2.5 cm × 6–8 mm, inner ones narrower than outer. Stamens ca. 2.5 cm; anthers orange-yellow. Style filiform, 3-lobed at apex; lobes white to deep yellow, short. Capsule ellipsoid, ca. 1.2 cm × 8 mm. Seeds light to reddish brown, ovoid, with small, white appendage. Fl. May–Jun, fr. Jul–Aug. $2n = 20$.

Mountain slopes, riverside grasslands; 1200–3000 m. NW Xinjiang [Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan].

2. *Crocus sativus* Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1: 36. 1753.

番红花 fan hong hua

Corms ca. 3 cm in diam.; tunic light yellow or yellowish brown, reticulate fibrous. Leaves 9–15, 15–20 cm × 2–3 mm. Flowers 1 or 2, fragrant. Perianth purple; segments oblanceolate, 4–5 cm, apex obtuse. Stamens ca. 2.5 cm; anthers yellow, apex slightly curved, pointed. Style 3-branched at apex; branches recurved, deep red, 2.5 cm or more. Fertile seeds not produced.

Cultivated throughout China [widely cultivated elsewhere, probably of hybrid origin in E Mediterranean region].

The style and stigmas are used medicinally, in cooking, and in the preparation of saffron dye.

Flora of China 24: 313. 2000.