

me specialised plant communities growing beneath the *Pinus jeffryi* that favours these unfertile conditions. Tom was evangelical about the importance of fire as a tool for maintaining balance in these delicate habitats.

At the National Forest Plant Nursery I was able to see how trees and understory plants are produced on a massive scale for reforestation of areas that have been harvested or badly burned. Driving west to the coast I climbed Humbug Mountain and was treated to cascades of ferns and trilliums in the forest. The National Parks in which Coastal Redwoods are preserved amazed me. Photos do these giants no justice. My host near San Francisco, William McNamara, gave me free access to his Chinese woodland collection and a cottage in which to stay. His knowledge of local conifers enabled me to see the beautiful blue *Pinus sabiniana*, *Cupressus sargentii* and *Torreya californica*. I returned to the UK armed with information and ideas for spicing up England's tired pinetums.

KYRGYZSTAN

by Patrick Hayes

From mid-April to early May is a good time to see bulbs in this Central Asian country, which is about the size of Britain. Ninety percent of the country is covered in mountains that support a wide variety of plants. I first visited the Botanic Garden in the capital Bishkek where there are good collections of bulbs such as Tulipa and Iris. The Arboretum houses many Kyrgyz trees and shrubs such as *Zabelia corymbosa*.

There was time for some field trips near Bishkek with a botanist from the Botanic Garden, which included a visit to the Ala Archa National Park where we were lucky enough to see *Crocus alatavicus* on areas of recent snow melt. In a small canyon about 25km from the capital we came across *Tulipa ostrowskiana*, *Corydalis ledebouriana* and *Iris kuschakewiczii* which was already in seed. *Tulipa greigii* grew on steep slopes near the top of the canyon and hundreds of *Iris (Juno) orchioides* were to be found nearby growing on East facing slopes at 1390m. I met field botanist Georgy Lazkov at the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences to see herbarium specimens of *Juno Iris/Zabelia corymbosa* and talk about my forthcoming field trip.

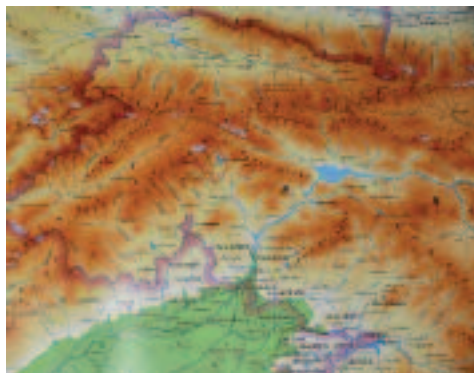
The field trip commenced on the 18th April and lasted eleven days, with the plants being easily accessible up to 2300m. *Colchicum kesselringii* was to be found in the Susamyr Valley at 2268m and its relative *Colchicum luteum* was seen in good numbers at 2589m. There were thousands of *Tulipa dasystemon* at lower altitudes while above, large expanses of Walnut forest *Scilla puschkinioides*, *Gagea* sp. were the dominant bulbs on short alpine turf. Higher still *Gymnospermium albertii* was growing under its woody relative, a species of *Berberis*. A hot exposed canyon near the Naryn River revealed *Iris narynensis*. The G.P.S read 632m a.s.l.; the lowest altitude of the trip. Near Sary Chelik National Park *Iris albertii* grew in large clumps. On a nearby slope was yet another *Juno Iris* with *Tulipa andromeda*. *Iris ruthenica* was abundant under the shade of *Prunus*.

Next stop was the remote Besh Aral Biosphere Reserve, which is accessed via the village of Jangy-Bazar. This village experienced -40°C last winter, showing that the bulbs must be well adapted to cold as well as hot temperatures. In this reserve *Tulipa kaufmanniana* and large numbers of *Fritillaria sewerzowii* were flowering on rocky slopes.

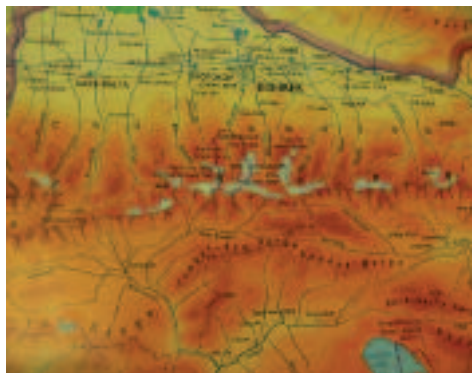
On returning to Bishkek I visited Yssak Atta Valley, just 30km from the city. In the wide river valley were a few flowering clumps of *Iris loczyi* as well as *Tulipa zenaidae* and *Tulipa dasystemon*. There was also time to visit the Kara Balta Gorge, about 100km west of the capital. *Allium karataviense* was growing in steep, slippery scree slopes and nearby the hard to cultivate genus *Orostachys* sp. was to be found in rock crevices.

The last day of field work took place in the Boom Gorge (Kyrgyz Grand Canyon), near Issykul Lake. Xerophytic plants are well suited here, and included *Pseudosedum lievenii* and three distinctly different *Allium* species.

My trip turned out to be a success and I hope my contacts and field notes will be of use to others at Kew. Thank you to the Kew Guild for this opportunity. A future Kew Diploma Student from Kyrgyzstan would be a perfect conclusion.



Left: Besh, Aral and Sary Chelik Nature Reserves



Right: Bishkek and Kyrgyz range

HORTICULTURE AIDS CONSERVATION IN MAURITIUS AND RODRIGUES

by Tessa Mills

Full of anticipation as my travel scholarship proposal became a reality, I landed in Mauritius, a jagged landscape of volcanic peaks and canyons which are predominantly forested with exotic vegetation. My first trip was to the Pamplemousses Botanic Garden, and from there I spent a week working in the National Parks and Conservation Nursery at Robinson.