

**Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:**

Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

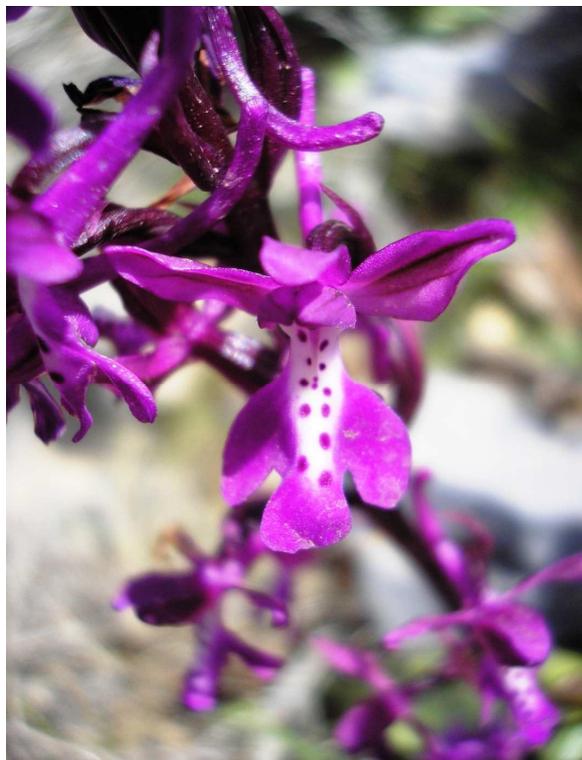
**The Orchids of Crete (Part 2): genus *Orchis*****The class of Anatolian Orchis**

(Anatolian Orchis, Sitia Orchis, Four-spotted Orchis)

(An article from our forums member **Ralf Schwab**, Obertshausen [Hessen]).

In continuation of our leaflet series "Orchids of Crete" (see our info-leaflet **269-08/E, Part 1**), here we look at the class of Anatolian Orchis of the genus *Orchis*

With the Anatolian Orchis, the Sitia Orchis and the Four-spotted Orchis, three quite similar *Orchis* species feature on Crete. Because the genetic differences are very small, these types extremely tend to hybridization and form in some areas (especially in Eastern Crete) whole hybrid populations, where otherwise simply determining parent types are blend into each other or are completely missing. All three are from small and slight growth, at some sites just a few cm high plants with 2 or 3 flowers dominate. The stems are upwards often intense dark red coloured for all species. While the Anatolian-and the Four-spotted Orchid grow in Crete on alkaline soils the Sitia Orchid prefers superficially acidic soil and blooms co-located significantly later than the first.



The **Anatolian Orchis** (*Orchis anatolica*) has large, loosely related flowers that are red to pale pink. Also white flowers are found. The brightly coloured central part of the labium shows dark red points arranged in two lines. The side lobes of the blossoms labium are usually only slightly domed down, the leaves are light green and often dark speckled. This type is only rarely homozygous on Crete. **Flowering season:** late March to mid April. **Habitat:** rocky slopes in open-Garrigue. **Plant find spot:** Meseleri / Prefecture Lassithi on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2008.



The **Sitia Orchid** (*Orchis sitiaca*) resembles the Anatolian Orchid (*Orchis anatolica*) with his loose inflorescence and the large flowers; it however is different in some aspects. The side lobes of the blossoms labium are strong domed down, so that the flower in the supervision looks very narrow. Furthermore the sepals (outer blossom leafs) have intensive green stripes on the inner. The Sitia Orchid has dark spotted leaves with conspicuous, grey-silver overflowing green colouring that represent a distinctive destination feature even in not flourishing condition. This species is endemic on Crete. **Flowering season:** early April to early May. **Habitat:** Meadows on superficial acidifying soils (meadow-Garrigue), up to 1300 m. **Plant find spot:** fig. left west of Gerakari / Prefecture Rethymno on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2007 and fig. right on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2007.



The **Four-spotted Orchid** (*Orchis quadripunctata*) is also a rather delicate built Orchid which occurs in a red flowering and a white version (most often in populations above 1200 m). Characteristic are the eponymous four points on the blossom labium, which enable a secure provision at least on homozygous occurrence. This type is the most common and most frequent of this group in Crete. **Flowering season:** end March to mid May. **Habitat:** on stony slopes with basic soils, up to 1300 m. **Plant find spot:** west of Gerakari / Prefecture Rethymno on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2007.