

Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

The Orchids of Crete (Part 9): genus *Ophrys* (IV) **(Hera-, Little Cretan-, Bosom- and Gortys- or Gregorian Orchid)**

(An article ^[1] from our forums member [Ralf Schwab](#), Obertshausen [Hessen]).

So far we introduced **38 Orchid types** of Crete with our leaflet series “**The Orchids of Crete**”. With info-leaflets No. 280-08/E to No. 282-08/E [Part 6-8, *Ophrys* (I-III)] we informed about the complex of *Ophrys*, which will be continued with the below description of additional 4 species from the group of “Spider”-*Ophrys*. Because of the similarity of colouring of the blossom labium is here as 5th type the “Gregorian” Orchid presented.

Indicator of the group of “Spider”-Orchids is the undivided labium (the “Gregorian”-Orchid has a tripartite labium), which are coloured dark brown or black. Mostly a white edged blue “H”, similar to the “Cretan-Orchid”, is the marking. Two lateral humps are on the labium, which are, depending on the type, strong or only implied, or completely missing (see “Little Cretan Orchid). Often there are transitional forms especially between “Hera’s Orchid” and the “Little Cretan Orchid”.



Hera Orchid (*Ophrys herae*) is an early blooming species of rather stocky and vigorous growth. It has a medium size brown labium which most has 2 strong and bright coloured humps. The sepals are greenish, the basis often red, the shorter petals are coloured darker, yellow-green to brown.

Flowering season: late February to mid April. **Habitat:** grassy Garrigue, also on sour soil. **Plant find spot:** Region of Kalo Chorio - Kalamáfka (26th of March 2008) and north of Thriptis (19th of March 2008).



Also the “**Little Cretan Orchid**” (*Ophrys sphegodes ssp. cretensis*) is blooming very early (at least in the lowlands). It is a polyanthus, usually tall plant with small circular labium that normally has none or only implied humps. The colour of the labium is black-brown, brighter going towards mid.

Flowering season: mid March to mid April. **Habitat:** Garrigue, Pine forest relict, up to 1300 m. **Plant find spot:** north of Thriptis (19th of March 2008), north-west of Vrysses (18th of April 2007) and region of Kalo Chorio – Prina (21st of March 2008)(2x).



The “**Bosom-Orchid**” (*Ophrys mammosa*) blooms late and has bigger flowers than the other types of the group. The labium has a black base and two strong lateral humps that are often reddish lightened. In extreme cases the labium contour can look triangular by the strongly handled edges.

Flowering season: end March to end April. **Habitat:** Garrigue, in open country, on basic soil. **Plant find spot:** Profitis-Ilias (22nd of March 2008), Jouchtas (24th of March 2008)(2x) and Malades (22nd of March 2008).



“Gortys Orchid” (*Ophrys sphegodes ssp. gortynia*) is a kind of slight growth and bloom later than the other types of group. The blackish labium is oblong with weak humps. The edges of the blossom labium aren't or poorly folded and often yellow bordered. It occurs locally on Crete and is found mostly in lower elevations. **Flowering season:** mid April to early May. **Habitat:** Garrigue, dry meadows, open olive groves, on basic soil. **Plant find spot:** Festos, South Crete (29th of March 2008).



The “Gregorian Orchid” (*Ophrys spruneri ssp. grigorianana*) has been described as a subspecies of SPRUNER'S Orchid. It has, in contrast to the subspecies of the Cretan Orchids, rose coloured sepals and petals and a tripartite labium. The flowers are larger and the labium often with round outline. This type flowers rather late and is endemic on Crete. The most so far known habitats are in the Southwest of the Central Southern of Crete. **Flowering season:** early to late April. **Habitat:** grassy Garrigue, meadow-slopes and terraces. **Plant find spot:** Drimiskos, South-west Crete (28th of March 2008).

^[1]: with the co-operation of [Ute Kluge](#) and [Heinz Eikamp](#)

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[to be continued with Part 10]

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