

BOOK REVIEW

BOB GIBBONS. 2025. **Europe's Alpine Flowers: A Field Guide.** (ISBN 978-0-691-23078-8 (flexbind/paperback). Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540, U.S.A. (Orders: press.princeton.edu). \$29.95 US; 496 pp, 1,500 color photographs, 5 7/8" x 8 1/4".

From the Publisher:

Europe's Alpine Flowers covers the flowering plants and conifers that occur regularly on mountains and in Arctic areas north of a line that runs from the Pyrenees to Southern Romania. For many botanists—and gardeners—the alpine flora is the best it gets. There are many species adapted to a harsh climate of extreme winter cold and strong winds, including some of our most beautiful rock plants, such as gentians, saxifrages, and crocuses. These also include subtle and rare flowers that require care to discover and identify. With outstanding photographs and concise text that covers key features, this guide enables confident identification in the field.

Covers the plants most likely to be seen above an elevation of 1,000 metres, concentrating on plants confined to high mountain areas of Europe and to the Arctic

More than 1,800 color photographs illustrating almost 1,800 species

Concise, descriptive species accounts including details of habitat, altitudinal range, flowering period, and distribution

Features easy-to-use text with minimal botanical jargon and illustrations of essential biological terms

With sections on flower identification, the alpine and Arctic environments and their habitats, and the best places to see alpine flowers

Comprehensive index including synonyms

Bob Gibbons (1949–2024) was a writer, photographer, and wildlife tour guide with an almost unrivaled knowledge of the European flora. By his 20s he had led botanical expeditions to Afghanistan and Nepal, and his later tours for Natural History Travel took in every continent except Antarctica. His widely praised images of wildflowers, birds, animals, and insects have appeared internationally in many magazines and books. He was the author of more than 40 books, including *Wildflower Wonders: The 50 Best Wildflower Sites in the World* (Princeton WILDGuides).

Europe's Alpine Flowers is arranged in taxonomic order. Although not stated, the family order appears to follow Angiosperm Phylogeny Group (APG IV) which reflects evolutionary relationships among plant species. In other words, arrangement is not by flower color or habit but rather what is related to what. For the trained taxonomist, this will be familiar but for many wildflower enthusiasts, this field guide may be challenging to use, i.e., for locating and identifying an alpine wildflower. Each species account provides common name, Latin name, species text (abbreviated description) followed by identification features like **hab** (habitat), **Alt** (altitude), **Dist** (distribution), and **Fl** (flowering times). Most of the nearly 1,300 species are accompanied with a color photograph and in some cases, more than one.

The guide is filled with excellent color photos. The index will be a useful tool, especially if you have an idea (or know the common name) of what your wildflower is but don't know where to find it in its taxonomic order, go to the index for the Latin name or common name.

The illustrated glossary is a big plus for beginners. If you love exploring alpine habitats, this compact, flexbound field guide will easily fit into your backpack.

—Barney Lipscomb,

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