

# Valderia

## Microcosm of the Maritime Alps

At present Valderia hosts around 450 plants grouped in fourteen different habitats that represent the principal ecosystems found in the Maritime Alps.

This lay-out is designed to suit the educational and informative purpose of the gardens, it brings within reach species that would otherwise take hours of walking to find and it also offers a clear, comprehensible picture of the plant life of the Park. Whilst discovering the peculiarities of the individual flowers there is the added pleasure of seeing the links between species and how they fit into their surroundings.



*Aconitum napellus*

# The flora

## of Alpi Marittime

The Maritime Alps have been defined as the hub of endemic species in the Alps. Here we find a considerable number of plants that have, to a greater or lesser degree, a limited area of distribution. These are species that define a flora.

This particular situation is due to a combination of factors, from the geographical position to the variation in altitude, from the morphology to the variety of geological substrata. Parco delle Alpi Marittime is a perfect demonstration of the correlation between variety in geomorphology and abundance of animal and botanic species.

These extraordinary features translated into numbers are represented by around two thousand higher plant species inside the Park – another five hundred if we consider fungi, moss and ferns – equivalent to a quarter of the entire Italian flora.



*Primula vulgaris*

# The habitats

The calcareous rockeries host lime-loving plants that are found on the sedimentary outcrops of the lower valley Gesso and the Valle Grande that leads to Palanfré. The riverside is colonized by herbaceous plants commonly found on scree, these plants are adapted to unstable stony ground; larches too are pioneer species, and are often

found colonising dry, sunny slopes between an altitude of 1200 and 2500 metres. The association of broad-leaved plants, these higher grasses are typical of cool, damp areas. The hay meadow hosts species that favour regular manuring and mowing; here we find a predominance of the forage species usually in the lower part of the valley.

The spring environment hosts species that are found where water surfaces, in particular mosses and ferns. In the beech understorey we can see plants that require plenty of humus and that flower when there is no leaf cover from the trees above. Among the rocks and scree of the siliceous rockery we find most of Alpi Marittime's exclusively endemic species growing. Beyond the upper tree line we

find species typical of alpine pasture. The peat bog is a depression in the ground where spring and snow melt water collects; here we find plants that like to grow with their roots in water. It is also the typical environment found beside shallow lakes. The soil is rich in peat, favouring sedge, rushes and cotton-grass. The shrub undergrowth is made up of bushes with woody

stems. The animal pen where stock was held at night is called 'gias' in Marittime. The soil has a particularly high nitrogen content because of the concentration of animal droppings and only a few species are able to grow in it. Along the banks of the stream we find wetland species that favour running water. In the mixed fir wood the predominant species is the

silver fir, a species that prefers a nutrient-rich soil and a high level of ambient humidity. With the silver fir we find spruce and larch. The accumulation of conifer needles makes the soil acid, so the undergrowth is sparse.



*Saxifraga florulenta*



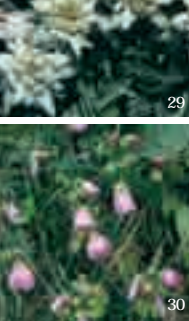
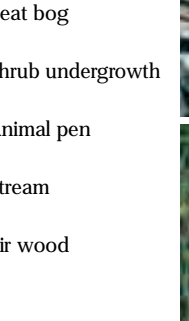
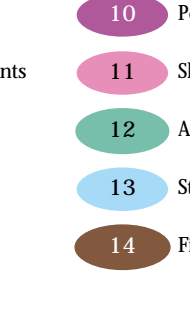
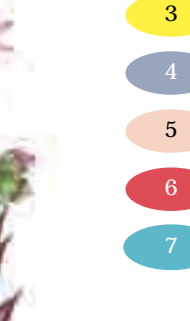
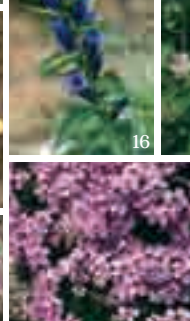
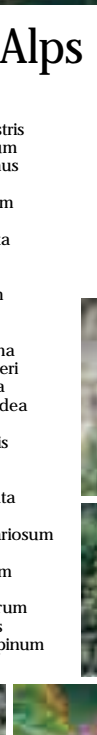
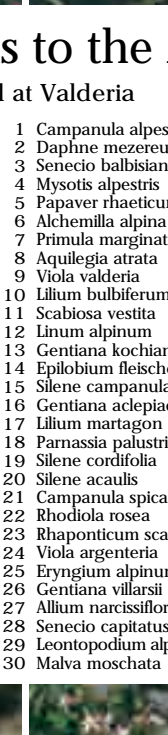
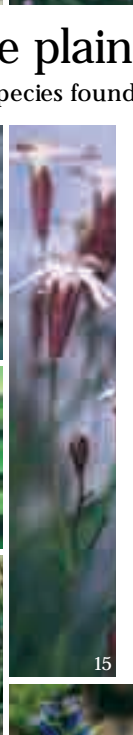
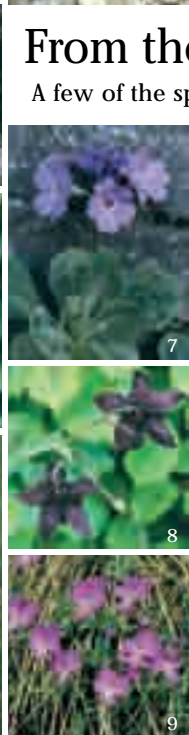
*Allium narcissiferum*



## From the plains to the Alps

A few of the species found at Valderia

- 1 Campanula alpestris
- 2 Daphne mezereum
- 3 Senecio balbisanus
- 4 Mysotis alpestris
- 5 Papaver rhoeoticum
- 6 Alchemilla alpina
- 7 Primula marginata
- 8 Aquilegia atrata
- 9 Viola valderia
- 10 Liliun bulbiferum
- 11 Scabiosa vestita
- 12 Linum alpinum
- 13 Gentiana kochiana
- 14 Epilobium fleischeri
- 15 Silene campanula
- 16 Gentiana aclepiadea
- 17 Liliun martagon
- 18 Parnassia palustris
- 19 Silene cordifolia
- 20 Silene acaulis
- 21 Campanula spicata
- 22 Rhodiola rosea
- 23 Rhaponticum scariosum
- 24 Viola argenteria
- 25 Eryngium alpinum
- 26 Gentiana villarsii
- 27 Allium narcissiflorum
- 28 Senecio capitatus
- 29 Leontopodium alpinum
- 30 Malva moschata



- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Calcareous rockery  | 8 Siliceous rockery  |
| 2 Dry river bed       | 9 Pasture            |
| 3 Larches             | 10 Peat bog          |
| 4 Broad leaved plants | 11 Shrub undergrowth |
| 5 Hay meadow          | 12 Animal pen        |
| 6 Spring              | 13 Stream            |
| 7 Understorey         | 14 Fir wood          |



*Sempervivum tectorum*



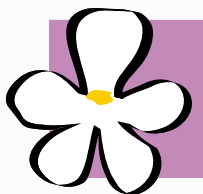
**Valdieria**  
Parco Naturale  
Alpi Marittime  
botanic gardens

REGIONE  
PIEMONTE  
**PIEMONTE  
PARCHI**

areagrafica - drawings by Claudio Geronzi - foto di Giorgio Palavestra - Archivio P.N.M. - 2015

**How to get there**  
Motorway (A6 Torino-Savona), leave at Fossano junction (coming from Savona); Mondovì junction (coming from Torino) or follow signs for Cuneo then Borgo San Dalmazzo. Take the SP 22 Valle Gesso road to Valdieri, Sant'Anna and Terme di Valdieri (33 km from Cuneo). If you are coming from the Riviera or Cote d'Azur, you come up the Valle Roya from Ventimiglia to the Colle di Tenda then drop down into Italy to Borgo San Dalmazzo.  
**Characteristics**  
Altitude 1400 metres  
Area: 10,000 square metres  
**Opening times**  
Every day  
from June 15th to September 15th  
From 9 - 12.30 and 14.30 - 18  
**Entry**  
Tickets on sale at the gate  
**Services**  
Guided tours (to be booked in advance)  
Publications and souvenirs  
Park information centre  
**Information**  
Park visitor centre (open in summer only)  
Tel: 0171 97208  
parcalma@tin.it  
www.parcoalpi.marittime.it

## Botanic Gardens Valdieria



**Alpi Marittime**  
Parco Naturale  
Piazza Regina Elena, 30  
12010 Valdieri (CN)  
Telephone: 0171 97397  
Fax: 0171 97542  
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www.parcoalpi.marittime.it

*Eryngium alpinum*



It is a cool place with lush vegetation and so in the 18th century paths and walkways were constructed to create "the English gardens" for the delight of visitors to the spa nearby. The gardens lay abandoned for many years until 1990 when the Parco Naturale delle Alpi Marittime took the area in hand and used it to site the new botanical gardens.

The botanic gardens "Valdieria" is situated at Terme di Valdieri, in the upper reaches of the Gesso valley in the heart of the Maritime Alps. "Valdieria" owes its name to Viola valdieria, an endemic violet first classified in 1780 in this very area. The discovery was made near the river by the Piedmontese botanist Carlo Allioni!

## Valdieria

Alpine Gardens since the nineteenth century

*Viola valdieria*



## the trail a discovery walk

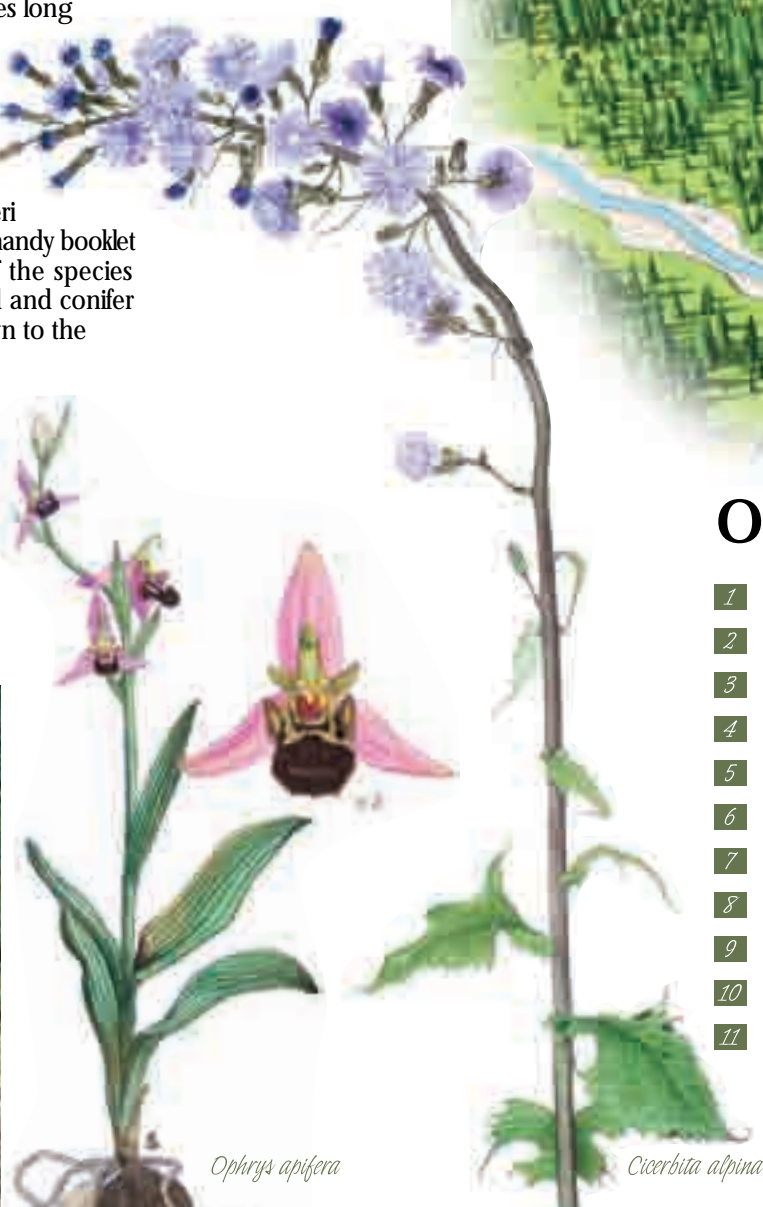
Inside the garden there is a nature trail, to walk the circuit takes about an hour; it is 950 metres long and gains 60 metres in height.

Along the walk are numbered observation posts, the numbers refer to chapters in the NatureTrail-Terme di Valdieri booklet (on sale at the gate). This handy booklet points out the main features of the species encountered in the broad leaved and conifer wood. Attention is also drawn to the main geological and landscape features.



## observation points

- |                                   |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 the silver fir wood             | 12 mosses                          |
| 2 the silver fir                  | 13 the larch tree                  |
| 3 the renewal of silver fir trees | 14 the dead tree                   |
| 4 the uprooted fir tree           | 15 ferns                           |
| 5 the sycamore                    | 16 the leaf litter                 |
| 6 reading the landscape           | 17 mushrooms and toadstools        |
| 7 the spruce                      | 18 chamois tracks                  |
| 8 the scree and boulders          | 19 songbirds                       |
| 9 rock lichens                    | 20 a panoramic view of Monte Matto |
| 10 the shrubs in the undergrowth  | 21 the rowan or mountain ash       |
| 11 the old mule track             | 22 the pioneers of the crags       |
|                                   | 23 the coppice                     |
|                                   | 24 the beech tree                  |



*Ophrys apifera*

*Cicerbita alpina*



*Leucojum vernum*

*Cicerbita alpina*

*Il giardino degli inglesi*

