

# SAXIFLORA

PLATE 8

**Scilla sinensis**  
(*Liliaceae*)

*Published by*  
THE AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY  
1270 SIXTH AVENUE  
NEW YORK

December 31, 1938

Price, 10 cents postpaid  
United States and Canada



M. J. O. R. F. S. E. W.

*Scilla sinensis*

## Scilla sinensis

This species occurs in Japan, and is said to be common in the vicinity of Canton, China, whence it extends along the coast of China, and northward to Peiping, as well as in Szechuan Province.

*Scilla japonica* Baker must be included in the synonymy of *S. sinensis* Merrill. The two names are founded, respectively, upon *Ornithogalum japonicum* Thunberg and *O. sinense* Loureiro. Type specimens of Thunberg's and Loureiro's plants, preserved, respectively, in Uppsala and in the Paris Museum, reveal no specific difference. While Thunberg's specific name, *japonica*, is the older, it is not tenable, today, in the genus *Scilla*, because Thunberg, himself, applied the binomial *Scilla japonica*, in 1794, to a different plant, now known as *Heloniopsis japonica* Maximowicz.

From available herbarium material, as well as from illustrations, it appears that the species varies much in stature, ranging from about four inches in height (above the ground) to two feet. Also, the shape of the raceme varies from cylindrical to conical.

While squills are commonly thought of as bearing brilliantly blue flowers in earliest spring, our plant is one of a number of interesting, late summer-flowering species with rose-colored flowers. In *S. sinensis* they are small and numerous, crowded into a dense raceme like a bright rose bottle-brush, on erect stalks, somewhat over a foot high in our garden.

This species is little known, and not often found in gardens; yet of the easiest culture, completely hardy, and disposed to thrive wherever squills will grow, that is, in a fairly rich, well-drained, loamy soil and in a situation at least partly open to the sun in the flowering season, but protected from acute drying-out in summer. Such a situation is often afforded by the foreground of a shrub border. We have found it a decidedly worthwhile and interesting plant in our Poughkeepsie garden, where it thrives lustily, increasing both from offsets and from self-sown seed, in a spot which receives only a few hours of sunlight on late summer days. It appears to require a minimum of attention.

We have transplanted bulbs of this squill successfully in late fall and early spring, and, at times, even during their growing stage.

Each of the white, narrowly oval bulbs, to one and a half inches in length, produces, unless crowded, several offsets each year. These offsets will grow to half their mature size in one year, and often flower in their second summer.

The foliage appears above ground in May. It is similar to that of the snowdrops. The leaves are linear, more or less channelled, strongly ribbed on the lower side, five to six inches long, dark green, and rather hard to the touch. This early leaf-growth dies down toward mid-summer. Then, after a brief rest period, the scapes begin to poke up, accompanied by a second growth of leaves. These later leaves are mostly a lighter green and somewhat softer-textured than the earlier, and grow to the same length, which about equals the length of the scape at the time when the flowers begin to open. There are mostly two, less often one or three leaves from each bulb, and one flowering stalk.

The erect scape continues to stretch in length from the time when the first flowers open, throughout the flowering and seed-bearing stage, from an original length of five or six inches to an eventual length of up to two feet (mostly less). The scape is cylindrical, strongly ribbed, green, but paler up in the raceme.

The flowers, opening about September 1, are arranged in a dense cylindrical raceme (in our plants), which is originally about two inches long but stretches eventually to perhaps twice that length. It is mostly not over three-quarters of an inch wide. There are up to forty or fifty flowers in a raceme. The thread-thin pedicels are held in a semi-erect position, each one subtended by a small, linear, membranous bract. In the average of our plants, the raceme is somewhat less dense than in the accompanying drawing.

The closed buds are top-shaped, with a blunt base, and green-tipped. This green cap is formed by bright green tips, showing on both surfaces of the floral segments, which are, otherwise, bright rose on both sides, obovate-lanceolate, blunt-tipped and widely spreading to reflexed.

The fleshy filaments, inserted at the base of the segments, taper gradually upward from a thickened base. They are deep lilac in the upper half and carry yellow anthers.

The prominent, dome-shaped, lilac-colored ovary tapers off into a dark-tipped style which does not protrude beyond the stamens. The style is about as long as the ovary; the stigma is a mere point. The ovary develops into a green capsule consisting of three bulging, one-seeded cells.

The entire plant is without odor or fragrance.

P. J. VAN MELLE

*Ornithogalum japonicum* Thunberg, Fl. Jap., 137. 1784.

*Ornithogalum sinense* Loureiro, Fl. Cochinch., 206. 1790.

*Dracaena alliaria* an herbarium name, by Loureiro, appearing on his type specimen.

*Barnardia scilloides* Lindley, Bot. Reg. plate 1029. 1826.

*Barnardia japonica* Roemer & Schultes, Syst. 7: 555. 1829.

*Scilla chinensis* Bentham, Flora Hongk., 373. 1861.

*Scilla japonica* Baker, Journ. Linn. Soc. 233. 1873. Not Thunberg.

*Scilla scilloides* Druce, Rept. Bot. Soc. & Exch. Club Brit. Isles, 2nd Suppl. 1917.

*Scilla sinensis* Merrill, Philipp. Jour. Sci. 15: 229. 1919.

*Scilla Thunbergii* Miyabe & Kudo, Sapporo Nat. Hist. Soc. Trans. 8: 3. 1921.