



Plants for Reflection: Crocus

The **Crocus** is a flowering plant from the Iris family. They are native to scrub and woodland areas across the Northern Hemisphere. The spice Saffron is made from *Crocus Sativus*. Crocuses are often one of the first flowers seen in Spring.

Bible Passage: Isaiah 35:1 (NRSV*)

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly

Isaiah was an important prophet keen to encourage a people in exile. Things were grim. God had enabled their escape from a regime of slavery and oppression, and they had expected by now to be living in freedom, comfort, and safety in their own land where food was plentiful. They were, instead, still wandering in a land where they might be free but even water and food were scarce. Isaiah is telling them that there will come a time of prosperity and abundance; first they must learn to trust in God for all their needs. God's promise, that they and their descendants would live in their own land, a land that only they possessed, would be fulfilled only if they trusted him completely. Only then would their lives blossom like the flowers in a desert after the rain. Then they would rejoice in God's providence.

Reflection: Wellbeing

What a joyful sight is a wilderness or a desert after rainfall. Seeds hitherto hidden in the dark earth, often for years, swell, grow shoots, blossom, and spread out to cover a previously arid ground with unsurpassed beauty. What a metaphor for our lives. We all go through times when we feel we are wandering in a wilderness. We feel lost and alone not knowing where to turn, who to talk to. This became especially poignant during the lockdown in 2020. With social interaction completely off limits, many more people suffered from mental health problems than ever before. People need other people to make them feel whole. People starved of contact with others live a desert-like existence. Renewing positive contact with others is like water falling on parched ground: lives change. Things are seen in a different light and individuals begin to blossom like the crocus in Spring. People's lives begin to develop along the lines God has set out for them. A smile or a chat can make a big difference to someone's day. For a lonely person, living a wilderness-like existence, just knowing that someone cares can encourage positive thinking and improve their wellbeing.

* New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicised Edition, © 1989, 1995, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Prayer

God of desert and wasteland who sends the rain to beautify the landscape, send showers of kindness into our barren lives so that we too may blossom and flourish as you intended.

God of freedom and forgiveness, lead us into the light of knowing your love and care for us. Help us to use our freedom wisely and encourage others to seek to know you. Enable us to reach out to those who feel lost and alone to let them know that someone cares.

God who showers us with generous love and fills us with joy, lift our hearts to praise your abundant glory. As we look at the beauty of the world around us may we appreciate all you do for us and give you the thanks you deserve.

Amen.

What we do: Dementia Friendly

Being aware of a number of dementia sufferers in our own congregation and in the various groups that use our church hall, we decided to seek 'Dementia Friendly' status in 2019. When not being used, we align our coloured chairs either side of the hall, green one side and red the other. We replaced the white toilet seats with red ones and placed red 'targets' in the men's urinals. The interior door frames were painted to make it easier for those suffering with dementia to see where the doors were. It is hoped that the Bible Garden will provide a quiet and healing space for everyone in need of time away from disturbing noise where they can sit and enjoy a small piece of God's beautiful world.

Saffron, from *Crocus Sativus*. is a traditional herbal medicine which has been used for hundreds of years to treat diseases. It is currently being researched as an aid to helping with memory and possible dementia treatment. Money to help with this and other research to support dementia sufferers has been raised through our monthly charity coffee mornings.