



**Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:**

**Sand or Sea daffodil (*Pancratium maritimum*)**



The sand daffodil, also known as sand lily, is a plant species from the amaryllis family (Amaryllidaceae) and far spread at the coasts of the Mediterranean, so also on Crete. It settles there primarily at sand beaches and similar locations. In the plant-sociological system it is considered as a kind of character of the class *Ammophiletea arenariae*, beach grass.

The sand lily grows as persistent, herbaceous plant and reaches stature heights up to 75 cm. As Geophytes it forms a deeply sitting bulb, which shows a diameter of 5 - 7 cm. The five to six basilar, in form of a flat spiral arranged foliage leaves appear after the bloomy. The simple, grey-green coloured leaves are strap formed with a length of up to 75 cm and width between 1 and 2 cm.

The blooming time is from July to Septembers. At the inflorescence scape sits over two red-brown, paper-like, about 5 - 7 cm long high sheets the terminal pseudo flowering blossom, which contain three to fifteen blooms. The remarkably large and aromatic blossoms bloom only from the afternoon in the up-following mornings. The androgynous blossoms are trimerous. The six similar formed, white tepals are connate to a long and a slim funnel-shaped crown tube, approx. 6 - 8 cm largely. The free sections of the tepals are 3 - 5 cm long, lineal-lanceolate. The six-toothed, funnel-like, white side crown is about two-third as long as the crown and is connected with the lower part of the stamens. The six arranged into two alternating circles stamens tower over the side crown. Three carpels grew together to a trilobular ovary.



The weakly triangular, egg-shaped, 2 - 3 cm long capsular fruit contains 10 - 40 seeds (see fig.: grain with germ bud; Frangokastello). They are pitch black and 11 - 13 mm large. The seeds are for a long time floatable, whereby also propagation can take place with the help of the sea water; a participation of ants in the propagation of the seeds is assumed.



The pictures on page 1 show in the upper row: rootstock (Plakias), blossom (Frangokastello) and single plant (Frangokastello); lower picture row: single plant (Plakias), seed capsule (Frangokastello) and a habitat with withered plants (Elafonissi).



The sand lily ranks among the plants, which were designated already in the Bible as “flower“

Their blooms form also frequently motive in mural paintings, so e.g. in the excavated bronze-temporal houses of Akrotiri on the volcanic island Santorin. Akrotiri is an archaeological excavation place in the south of the island Santorin. In 1967 the archaeologist *Spyridon Marinatos* discovered the city from the Cyclades culture with Minoan influence. The city was buried in its heyday by a volcanic eruption and therefore tinned for more than 3.500 years (see also our leaflet at: [[http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter\\_en/160-06E.pdf](http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter_en/160-06E.pdf)]

J) The excellent preservation condition of the buildings and frescoes therefore permits views of the social, economic and culture history of the Bronze Age in the Aegean.

The various frescoes are characteristic for the high standard of living of the Acroterion. The frescoes of Akrotiri are affected more strongly of the Minoan culture than on other islands of the Cyclades; the use of colors to decorative purposes is found on Crete already since the Neolithic Age.



The flora is very detail-faithfully illustrated in the Frescoes. Many are identical to a large extent to those from Mycenae, Phylacopi (on Melos) and in Knossos (Crete), which speaks for a direct exchange of the artists or among them. An alternative interpretation, which already goes back on *Marinatos*, shows the example of papyrus and sand lily (see fig.: Papyrus or sand lily), although a special cultural function of this plant type is unknown.

Botanicals from the sand lily also apply in the cosmetics; they are supposed to reduce the surface and Pigmentation (marks) of the skin and lighten the complexion.

**Image sources:** picture on cover: de.wikipedia.org; image of frescoes: fipsi.ameriv.de;  
**Pictures:** *Maria Eleftheria* (Crete)