Review of taxons from genus *Muscari* cultivated in Department of Ornamental Plants in Szczecin

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Summary

There is a great disarray in the taxonomy of genus *Muscari*. About 200 taxons are cultivated. Many plant names have their synonyms. The most often cultivated taxons are *Muscari armeniacum* and *M. botryoides*. Also *M. aucheri* and *M. latifolium* have become more popular. It is difficult to find information on growth, development and hardiness of grape hyacinths.

In 2008–2009 in the Department of Ornamental Plants in West Pomeranian University of Technology in Szczecin a collection of taxons from genus *Muscari* was gathered. *M. armeniacum* and its cultivars: ‘Blue Spike’, ‘Cantab’, ‘Heavenly Blue’, ‘Atlantic’, ‘Blue Pearl’ and ‘Fantasy Creation’; *M. aucheri* and its cultivars ‘Blue Magic’, ‘Dark Eyes’, ‘Mount Hood’, ‘Sky Blue’ and ‘White Beauty’; *M. azureum*; *M. botryoides*; *M. comosum*; *M. latifolium*; *M. macrocarpum*; *M. muscarimi*; *M. neglectum* and *M. ‘Valerie Finnis’* were collected and described in this article.

Key words: *Muscari*, taxon, collection

INTRODUCTION

Grape hyacinths are popular spring blooming bulbs. Most of them originate from the Mediterranean region and from SE Asia. It is difficult to find how many species of genus *Muscari* are cultivated. Authors describe from 30 to over 60 species, but new taxons have been described for all the time [1-4, www.home-3.tiscali.nl/~hennessy/Species%20and%20cultivars.htm, www.paghat.com/garden-
There is still some disarray in the taxonomy of that genus. Many plant names have a lot of synonyms. In general, about 200 taxons are cultivated [3–5, www.rhs.org.uk, www.ipni.org].

It is difficult to find some information about growth, development and hardiness of grape hyacinths in the literature. Two species and their cultivars: *M. armeniacum* and *M. botryoides* are widely cultivated. *M. aucheri* (about 15 cultivars), *M. latifolium* and *M. neglectum* have also become more popular [2, 6].

In 2008–2009 in the Department of Ornamental Plants in West Pomeranian University of Technology in Szczecin a collection of taxons from genus *Muscari* was gathered. Short descriptions of these taxons are given in this article.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF TAXONS FROM GENUS *MUSCARI* EVALUATED IN 2008–2009 IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ORNAMENTAL PLANTS IN SzCZECIN**

*M. armeniacum* Leichtlin ex Baker

*M. armeniacum* originates from SE Europe and NW Iran. It is characterized by bulbs of circumference about 10 cm, slightly elongated, with a grey tunic. Six to eight grey-green linear leaves of about 30 cm length and 0.3–0.8 cm width are always longer than a scape. Sapphire blue flowers of cup-shaped crown with a white rim are gathered in thick racemes of 2–10 cm in length. They are set on the scape of 20 cm height and emerge in April. Sterile flowers (2–10) are situated at the top of the raceme [1–6, www.paghat.com/garden7hyacinths.html]. The most popular cultivars of *M. armeniacum* are:

- ‘Blue Spike’ – Dutch cultivar with the scape of 10–20 cm in height, flowering in April. It is characterized by double bright cobalt-blue flowers, some tipped greenish yellow [1, 3, 4, www.home-3tiscali.nl/~hennesy/Species%20and%culivars.htm, www.rhs.org.uk];
- ‘Cantab’ – it is not a very vigorous cultivar. Plants are dwarfer in comparison with *M. armeniacum* and also flower later. The bulbs of that cultivar are smaller than those of the species and do not have the round shape [www.home-3tiscali.nl/~hennesy/Species%20and%culivars.htm, www.rhs.org.uk]. It is characterized by pale blue flowers [3];
- ‘Heavenly Blue’ – cultivar of blue flowers. Sometimes it is included to the species *M. botryoides* or described as *M. armeniacum* [6].

Cultivars seldom grown in Poland are:

- ‘Blue Pearl’ – it flowers early, about three weeks earlier than the species. Its leaves emerge in early winter and flowers are blue [www.rhs.org.uk].
• ‘Fantasy Creation’ – is similar to *M. armeniacum* ‘Blue Spike’. It is characterized by deep lavender flowers. Its raceme is compact, of pyramidal shape. Dried flowers can be used as flower decorations [www.rhs.org.pl].


*M. aucheri* originates from Turkey. It is characterized by erected, narrow leaves of about 20 cm in length. Tubular, bright blue flowers appear in spring and are gathered in short racemes of 1–4 cm in length. Brighter sterile flowers are usually at the top of the raceme [1, 2, 10, www.home-3tiscali.nl/~hennesy/Species%20and%20cultivars.htm, www.rhs.org.uk]. The most popular cultivars of *M. aucheri* are:

- ‘Blue Magic’ – it flowers from March to April. Its flowers are strong dark blue [www.rhs.org.uk];
- ‘Dark Eyes’ – its leaves are of 15–20 cm in length and of 1.5 cm width. It flowers in the middle of March and is characterized by cobalt blue flowers gathered in a fluffy raceme. The lower fertile flowers have a pure white rim and the sterile flowers are slightly paler [www.home-3tiscali.nl/~hennesy/Species%20and%20cultivars.htm, www.paghat.com/garden7hyacinths.html];
- ‘Mount Hood’ – its grassy foliage emerges in late autumn and is evergreen. The sterile flowers are snowy white and fertile flowers are cobalt. The raceme is of pyramidal shape [www.paghat.com/garden7hyacinths.html];
- ‘Sky Blue’ – its fertile flowers are of sky blue colour and the sterile flowers are very bright, nearly white. The raceme is of 4–6 cm in length. One or two racemes grow from the bulb and 65 to 80 fertile flowers and about 20 sterile flowers are set on it [www.home-3tiscali.nl/~hennesy/Species%20and%20cultivars.htm, www.rhs.org.uk];
- ‘White Beauty’ – plants are of 10–15 cm in height. Sterile flowers of that cultivar are white and fertile flowers are tinged pink [www.home-3tiscali.nl/~hennesy/Species%20and%20cultivars.htm, www.rhs.org.uk].


*M. azureum* originates from East Turkey. It has round bulbs with a brown tunic. 2–3 narrow leaves of 20 cm in length, emerging in spring. Flowers of that species are bright blue with a darker stripe in the middle of petal. They are bell-shaped, narrow at the top, gathered in short (1–3 cm in length), thick racemes. *M. azureum* flowers at the beginning of March. Cultivar ‘Album’ of white flowers is also often cultivated [1–4, 6, www.home-3.tiscali.nl/~hennesy/Species%20and%20cultivars.htm, www.paghat.com/garden7hyacinths.html, www.rhs.org.uk, www.ipni.org].
M. botryoides (L.) Mill

M. botryoides originates from Europe and has round bulbs, smaller than M. armeniacum (of circumference 4–8 cm and of 2 cm diameter). 2–4 leaves are blue-green, always emerge in spring and are of 25 cm length and 0.5–1.3 cm width. Scape is of 10–35 cm length. Flowers are characterized by round crown, 2.5–5.0 cm length and are set on short petioles. They are violet-blue. Sometimes 4–9 sterile flowers are at the top of the raceme. M. botryoides and its cultivar ‘Alba’ are the mainly cultivated ones [3, 6].

M. comosum (L.) Mill., syn. M. pinardii (Boiss) Boiss., Leopoldia pinardii (Boiss.) Halácsy (over 20 known synonyms)

M. comosum originates from South Europe and North Africa. Its natural sites are also in Poland [8, 9]. Three to six narrow leaves grow from a bulb of 3.5 cm in diameter. That species flowers late (in May–June). Flowers (40–100) are gathered in loose, cone-shaped racemes. Fertile flowers are yellow-green. Violet-blue sterile flowers (20–30) are at the top of the raceme [3–8]. M. comosum ‘Plumosum’ (syn. ‘Monstrosum’) is also often cultivated. Its racemes are pinnate, consisting only of pink-purple filiform sterile flowers [1, 10, www.home-3.tiscali.nl/~hennessy/Species%20and%20cultivars.htm, www.paghat.com/garden7hyacinths.html].

M. latifolium Kirk

M. latifolium originates from NW Turkey. It has only one, sometimes two broad leaves. Its leaves are green, of 7–30 cm in length. Fertile flowers are violet-black, gathered in thick racemes of 2–6 cm in length. Brighter sterile flowers are blue, gathered at the top of the raceme [1, 3, 4]. It flowers in April. The species is often propagated from seeds. A white form of that species is also known but cannot be propagated from seeds, because the flowers turn out blue again [1–4, www.home-3.tiscali.nl/~hennessy/Species%20and%20cultivars.htm, www.paghat.com/garden7hyacinths.html, www.rhs.org.uk].

M. macrocarpum Sweet (syn. M ambrosiacum, M. moschatum var. flavum Boiss.)

M. muscarimi Medicus (syn. Hyacinthus muscari L., Muscari ambrosiacum Moench, Muscari mosschatum Willd.)

_M. muscarimi_ originates from Greece and from Western Turkey. Its bulbs are large with thick, fleshy roots. The leaves, 3–6 per plant, are linear-lanceolate, of 10–20 cm length and 0.4–1.5 cm width, grey-green. The scape is of 10–18 cm height, erect and shorter than the leaves. Fertile flowers are dirty grey-white. Sterile flowers (if present) are violet [1–4, www.home-3.tiscali.nl/~hennessy/Species%20and%20cultivars.htm, www.rhs.org.uk, www.ipni.org].

M. neglectum Guss. ex Ten. (10 synonyms known)

_M. neglectum_ originates from Iran, Syria, Cyprus, North Africa. Its leaves are narrow, of 40 cm in length, sometimes emerge in autumn. Four to six leaves grow from the bulb. Flowers are blue-black, oval, of 0.4–0.8 cm in length, of nice scent, with a white rim. They are gathered in raceme of 1–5 cm in length [1-3, 8, 10, www.home-3.tiscali.nl/hennessy/Species%20and%20cultivars.htm, www.paghat.com/garden7hyacinths.html].

Muscari ‘Valerie Finnis’

That cultivar is usually offered in catalogues as _M. armeniacum_ or _M. neglectum_. Its leaves are dark green, coiled and lay flat on the ground. The foliage emerges very early in spring. It flowers later than _M. armeniacum_. Raceme is dense with flowers of pale lavender blue. Flowers are set on the raceme spirally [www.home-3.tiscali.nl/hennessy/Species%20and%20cultivars.htm, www.paghat.com/garden7hyacinths.html].

REFERENCES

PRZEGŁĄD TAKSONÓW Z RODZAJU MUSCARI UPRAWIANYCH W KATEDRZE ROŚLIN OZDOBNYCH W SZCZECINIE

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Streszczenie


Słowa kluczowe: Muscari, takson, kolekcja