

Martagon Lily or Turk's-cap Lily – *Lilium martagon*

Because of its pretty pink flowers, the martagon lily is among the most striking summer plants of the National Park Thayatal. Its inflorescence can consist of up to twelve pink flowers with their typical red spots and their petals folded backwards. The plant owes its name to its turban-like shape. As the flowers are facing down, most insects looking for nectar cannot get a hold. Only a few butterfly types – here mostly hawk moths – manage to collect nectar with their long proboscis while hovering in midair. In order to attract nocturnal insects, the flowers exude their tempting smell mostly in the evening. Later, once the plant has been pollinated, the ovary develops into a triple capsule in which the seeds ripen. In September the wind blows the ripe seeds out of the erect capsules.

Sometimes plants can be found with only the flower pulled off. Not to worry, this is not a lapse of some misguided botanist. Deer like the taste of the blooms and therefore bite them off sometimes even when they are still closed. The leaf lily beetle also makes life difficult for the martagon lily. It digs a hole into the side of the flower and eats it up from the inside.

The plant is easily recognizable even without flowers. The leaves are set alternately at the bottom, and in the middle of the stem they are grouped in false whorls of 8 to 14 leaves. This crest of leaves and the size of the plant are unmistakable features. Moreover the plant has a yellow rhizome, which brought her the old name of “golden onion”.

This rhizome is used in natural medicine as a remedy against hemorrhoids and also used to be put around the necks of teething children to soothe the pain. Today, amber necklaces are used for the same purpose. The golden colour of the rhizome also inspired alchemists. They used it to try and turn base metals into gold.