

# Montbretia

(*Crocasmia × crocosmiiflora*)



**Family name:** Iridaceae (Iris family)

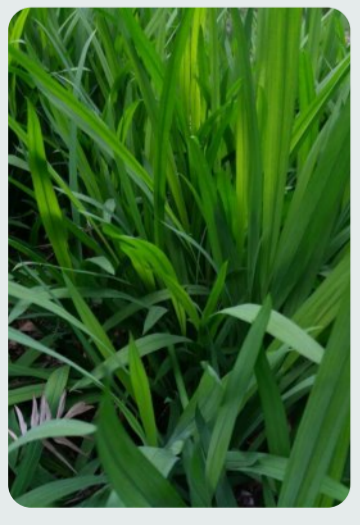
**Common name/s:** Montbretia, Coppertips, Falling Stars



**Montbretia** (*Crocasmia × crocosmiiflora*) is a perennial herbaceous plant known for its striking orange-red flowers and arching stems. In Ireland, it is considered an invasive species that can outcompete native vegetation, particularly in hedgerows, woodland edges, and disturbed areas. The plant spreads primarily through vegetative propagation via its corm system, making management challenging. Control measures include mechanical removal, herbicide application, and monitoring to limit its spread. If left unmanaged, Montbretia can significantly impact local biodiversity and alter the structure of natural habitats.

**Description** - Montbretia is a perennial herbaceous plant known for its bright orange-red flowers and arching stems. It is a hybrid species, originally developed in France by crossing two South African species, *Crocasmia pottsii* and *Crocasmia aurea*. It has naturalised in various regions outside its native range, including the UK and Ireland, where it is considered invasive in some areas. Montbretia can form dense colonies, displacing native plants and altering habitats.

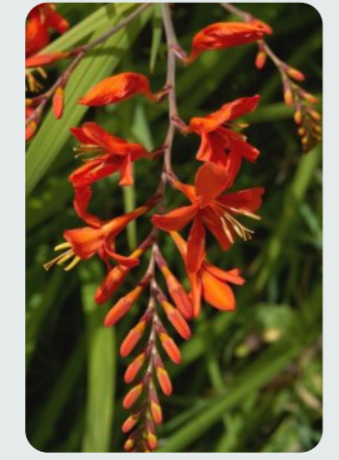
**Key characteristics include:**



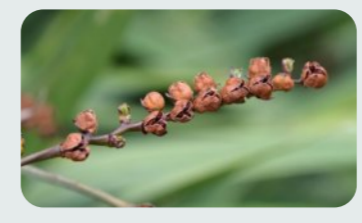
**Height:** Grows to a height of 60-100 cm, with flowering stems that can arch outward.

**Leaves:** The leaves are narrow, lance-shaped, and pleated, measuring 30-60 cm in length. They are bright green and grow in a fan-like arrangement from the base.

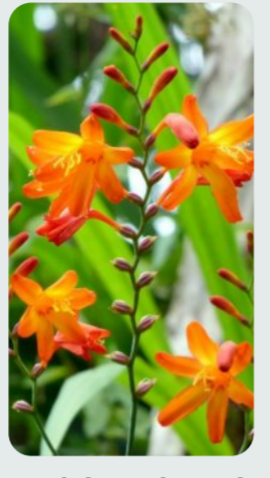
**Flowers:** Produces bright orange to red, funnel-shaped flowers arranged in branched clusters (spikes) along the upper part of the arching stems. Flowering occurs from July to September.



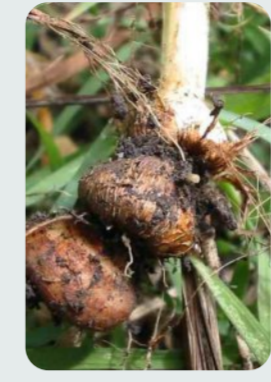
**Fruit:** Forms capsules containing small, round seeds, though seed production is less common compared to vegetative spread.



**Stem:** The flowering stems are arching, slender, and wiry, with multiple branching flower spikes.



**Root:** Has a corm-based root system, with corms that grow in chains, allowing the plant to spread rapidly.



**Habitat** - Montbretia is a hybrid species originally developed in cultivation but has since naturalised in various regions. It thrives in:

- **Woodland Edges and Hedgerows:** Commonly found along woodland edges, in hedgerows, and in scrublands, where it can spread extensively.
- **Roadsides and Disturbed Areas:** Frequently grows in disturbed soils, such as roadsides, railway embankments, and waste ground.
- **Gardens and Urban Areas:** Often planted in gardens as an ornamental, from where it can escape into the wild.

The plant prefers moist, well-drained soils and grows best in full sun to partial shade. It is highly adaptable to a range of soil types, including sandy, loamy, and clay soils.

**Status in Ireland** - In Ireland, Montbretia is considered an invasive species, particularly in hedgerows, woodland edges, and riverbanks, where it can form dense colonies that outcompete native flora.

It is listed under the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, making it an offence to plant, introduce, or cause its spread in the wild.

**Reproduction and Spread** - Montbretia primarily spreads through vegetative propagation, though seed production can also contribute to its spread:

- **Corm Division:** The plant spreads rapidly through corms that grow in chains, with new corms forming along the roots. This vegetative spread enables it to form dense colonies.
- **Human Activity:** The movement of soil containing corms or intentional planting can facilitate the spread to new areas. Garden waste dumping is a common cause of its spread into the wild.

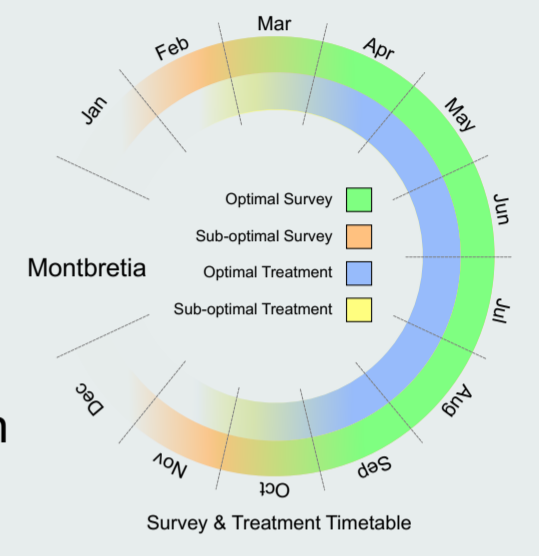
- **Seed Production:** While seed production is possible, vegetative spread through corms is the primary mode of propagation.

**Management and Control** - Controlling Montbretia can be challenging due to its robust corm system and ability to regenerate from fragments. Management strategies include:

- **Mechanical Control:** Digging up the corms can be effective for small infestations, but care must be taken to remove all corms and fragments to prevent regrowth.

Repeated digging may be necessary for larger infestations.

- **Chemical Control:** Herbicides containing glyphosate can be used to treat large patches, especially in late summer when the plant is actively growing.



Multiple applications may be needed for complete control.

- **Preventative Measures:** Avoid dumping garden waste in natural areas, and monitor gardens and urban areas for signs of escape.

**Ecological Impact** - Montbretia can have significant ecological impacts, particularly where it becomes dominant:

- **Competition with Native Species:** Forms dense colonies that outcompete native plants, reducing biodiversity in woodland edges, riverbanks, and other habitats.
- **Alteration of Habitats:** Its dense growth can change the structure of plant communities, affecting species that rely on open ground or less dense vegetation.
- **Persistence in the Landscape:** Once established, Montbretia can be difficult to eradicate, due to its extensive corm system and ability to regenerate.

For further information and free advice, please contact:  
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