

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are a group of fifth-grade students from the 38 Primary School 'Vasil Aprilov' in the city of Sofia. In order to create our Olympic wreath for the competition, we studied quite thoroughly the biological diversity of plant life in Bulgaria. We selected the plants for our wreath after careful consideration and a lot of discussions.

Initially, we wove the groundwork of our wreath from the branches of a cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*). Within them we interwove real blossoms, together with both models of unique for the world plants that are symbolic for Bulgarian nature, and plants that are important in economic terms, such as:

- Gypsophila tekirae – wandering why we used this plant in particular? Gypsophila tekirae (known as Baby's Breath in the USA and Canada and as Soapwort in Britain) is an endemic species of a perennial plant from the carnation family (Caryophyllaceae) found only in Bulgaria on the territory of the Pazardjik region (the protected area). Some curious information: Gypsophila tekirae was first described and classified in 1929 by Bulgarian botanist Boris Stefanov, full member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The name and species tekirae is derived from an old name of the Tri Voditsi village when it bore the name Tekira.
- Tulipa splendens or 'sparkling tulip' (*Liliaceae family*). We chose it because it is extremely rare and unique. It was discovered by Bulgarian botanist Dimitar Delipavlov in 1976 near the village of Simeonovo not far from the town of Yambol (South East Bulgaria), and up to this day it has not been found anywhere else in the country. What is more, in 1979, around Simeonovo were counted not more than... 20 plants. It has been included as an endangered species in the Red Book of Bulgaria (1984).

As we love and appreciate nature in Bulgaria we made the effort to make models of the blossoms of these rare plants. We could not allow ourselves to pick live blossoms of them. We also added a made by us model of a bulrush, and a 'blossom' of an oil-bearing rose. We tried to be faithful to the fullest in replicating the actual flower patterns.

- Oil-bearing rose (*Gallicanae*) – one of the symbols our country is famous with. It pertains to the Rosaceae family, species *Rosa L.*, subspecies *Cynorodon*, selection *Gallicanae*. The rose oil and rose water are made namely from the oil-bearing rose that has made the Rose Valley (the region around the towns of Karlovo and Kazanluk) well-known.
- Wheat (Species *Triticum*; *the Poaceae family*). Why wheat? Dobrudja is one of the most well-known regions in Bulgaria called also the granary of our country. Wheat is a collective term for several species of plants botanically falling in the *Triticum* species, and representative of the Poaceae family. Wheat is a cereal grain used in the making of bread. Wheat grain is the part of the plant used for food.
- Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*). We chose it because it is one of the most important plants for one to survive. It can serve as a source of tinder (the fluff of the fruit), as 'drills' to light a fire through rubbing, fibers for twisting ropes, materials for weaving baskets and rush-mats. Its most important virtue, however, is that it offers food in the wild

throughout the year! Bulrush is found along different lakes, swamps and rivers and as a whole prefers silty soil. It usually grows in expanding tufts that can also shelter the different water-birds nesting in them. In winter, the root system of the bulrush can easily be dug out and used in the form of nourishing flour. In early spring, bulrush starts giving out new shoots. In late spring, the green flower stalks already start to show from the protective leaves' coating. In summer, the flowers ripen and grow heavy with protein rich pollen. The bright yellow color of the bulrush bushes is seen from afar. To summarize: If you are lost in the wild – look around. If you see the dark green thickets of bulrush, you might not be in a disastrous predicament after all!

- Wild geranium (*Geranium*). Following the ancient Bulgarian tradition, we also wove wild geranium in our wreath – wishing good health and lots of success to the participants in the London Olympics 2012.
- Spruce (*Picea abies*) – as Sofia is at the foot of the Vitosha Mountain where the Bistrishko Branishte Reserve is located, included in 1977 in the UNESCO 'Man and Biosphere' Programme after it was declared a biosphere reserve, so, we added a spruce branch with a cone to the wreath.

In the center of the wreath we wove in one of the symbols of the Olympic movement – the five Olympic rings.

With all our hearts we wish success to all participants, but mostly to the Bulgarian athletes!