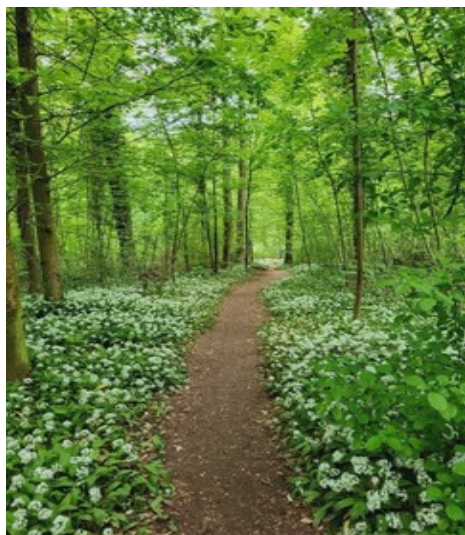


## Summer in Austria

Nature lovers, will you come with me on an early summer ramble through the forest and meadows of my youth in Austria?

My interest began as a child, when every hike with my parents was a fun quiz. They knew everything, every plant, every tree, every creature, whether four-legged, many-legged, crawling or winged, and we children learned from them.



In the morning sun, dewdrops still flash on grasses, buttercups, daisies, deep blue sage and daisies in the cool meadow. The Goat's Beard has not even woken up! In the forest we walk as in a green cathedral. It still smells of wild garlic (a scent that some people find acceptable only in wild garlic pesto). There is a chaffinch singing, its song echoing as if in a church. Chatty great tits, blue tits and crested tits search diligently for butterfly caterpillars and beetle larvae in the undergrowth.

The daphne with its wonderful fragrance has unfortunately already faded, but here and there in clear patches in the mixed forest you can see Turk's-Cap and groups of tall large-flowered campanula, columbines and white spiraea. The Solomon's Seal and the lily of the valley are already at the end of their season. With them, the May bugs that my naughty schoolmates liked to

push into our blouse collars despite our loud protests! We also find ladybirds and let them fly off the tips of our fingers for good luck!

It is still too early in the year for longhorn beetles, stag beetles and the red soldier beetles (also called 'Franzosen' i.e. Frenchmen), but in the damp leaves we find fire salamanders, mysterious creatures despite their bright colours.

A jay flits by with a loud cry and blue-glowing wings. There are also birds of prey: the sparrow hawk, for example. But it flies so fast through the trees that you usually only recognise it after it has gone!

A magical experience awaits us in a sunny clearing: there we find flowering diptam (Latin: dictamus; pictured). When you approach it, you are suddenly enveloped in a cloud of fragrance! And one more sight of magic: a deer is peacefully standing at the edge of the forest, although it sees us. Beautiful!



Look at this clear view! - In such lovely weather you can see for miles, first wooded hills, behind them the high, bare peaks. Some still have ice and snow.



On the meadow slope in front of us, the soft blue of wild lupins, and the pink foxglove, swarming with bees and butterflies in the warm sunshine. Later, we could pick raspberries and strawberries here, and in the coniferous forest ahead, we could certainly pick 'Schwammerln' (fungi).

Unfortunately, it's too late for that today. We'll just have to come back and continue up to the gentians and 'mountain roses' (actually a type of rhododendron).