
STAMPED POSTAL CARD

The US Postal Service has announced that it plans to issue a new non-denominated (34c) stamped postal card as part of its 2017 stamp program. It will be the first postal card issued by the USPS in about two years. No issue date has yet been set.



The new postal card features an illustration of a Chilean Blue Crocus (*Tecophilaea cyanocrocus*) from pre-existing artwork by illustrator and designer Dugald Stermer (1936–2011). His penciled calligraphy under the flower indicates one of its common names Azulillo—loosely translated from Spanish, it means “little blue thing”—with its botanical name above.

The Chilean Blue Crocus has brilliant blue flowers and is hardy in seven of nine U.S. Department of Agriculture zones. It generally flowers in February or March in North America. Despite its common name, it is not a true crocus at all. Instead, it belongs to the family Tecophilaeaceae.

It grows on stems up to four inches (10 cm) tall, with one to three linear fleshy leaves. The single flowers are approximately one inch (2.5 cm) across, goblet shaped, and are an unusual deep gentian blue color, with a whitish center. The root is a nearly sphere-shaped corm with a fibrous cover.

The flower is native to central Chile and was only known to grow in the range of hills around Santiago at about 3,000 meters above sea level. It was thought to be extinct in the wild due to over-collecting, over-grazing, and habitat destruction. However, in the spring of 2001, a large population was discovered on private land south of Santiago.