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# Bulb Log Diary

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*Eucomis tricolor*



These past few weeks I have felt a change in the air with a distinctive autumnal feel, which is especially noticeable in the mornings.

It is interesting because I hear the same comments from people that I meet on my walks but how do we know?

Firstly I have been watching the sun getting gradually lower in the sky plus the temperatures have



been falling, most noticeably bringing cooler nights, but there seems to be something else, almost an instinctive ancestral inherited sense that indicates the shifting of the seasons. It is the same with plants which also seem to know when the seasons are changing yes many respond to daylight, temperature and possibly moisture levels but many seem to have that sense of the time of the season such as **Eucomis tricolor**. This plant remains underground through winter, spring and most of the summer only appearing above ground in August then flowering through to November or beyond depending on our winter weather and so *Eucomis tricolor* has become one of the seasonal indicator plants.



Can you spot *Eucomis tricolor* in this picture?





**Eucomis tricolor** has proven perfectly hardy for us, having survived growing outside for over thirty years, and I love the effect of its lime-green maroon-speckled leaves and stems not to mention the pineapple like cap to the flower head. Like all plants it does better in some years than others so judging by the number of flowering stems, five, this is a relatively good year, last year there were only three. It does not follow that this is a better year rather it reflects that it grew well enough last year to build up to producing the five flower stems.



Other plants which indicate that the summer is coming to an end include **Gentiana septemfida**.





The flowers of **Codonopsis grey-wilsonii** only start to appear in August. I suspect they have not enjoyed the dry conditions we have experienced because they are not growing so strongly, nor flowering so well, this year.







The indicator plants remind me that it is time to cut back old growths and prepare beds, such as the 'new bed beside the pond', for the imminent flowering of the autumn Crocus and other bulbs.



I leave the *Dactylorhiza* to shed their seed but have cut back most of the other spent seasonal growths then I refreshed the mulch of pine needles in anticipation of what treasures might appear in the coming weeks.





The **Ramonda** species growing in the corner troughs are looking nice and green after the recent rain but that was not the case just a few weeks ago when they looked shrivelled, as if they were dead, as shown in the picture below.







We mostly refer to the cold tolerance of plants when we talk of their hardiness but in the changing climate we will need to think more about the ability of plants to grow in the hotter drier conditions most of us are experiencing. Ramonda are among the plants that have evolved resistance to drought during which they shrivel to the extent that they may look dead but when the rain comes the water reaches their shallow roots so they are quickly resurrected.



Compare the picture above, taken before the rain, with this one taken after two days of rain.

Now autumn is on the way and these **Ramonda** are in good health I will be splitting some of the more congested rosettes in the foreground.





Among the many plants that are not enjoying our new weather is **Rhododendron bureavii** – the leaves are much smaller than they would be in wetter years and they are also rather wrinkled looking. Any damage done to such woody plants and shrubs by the prolonged dry weather, especially damage to the root mass, may not be fully manifest until at least next year.

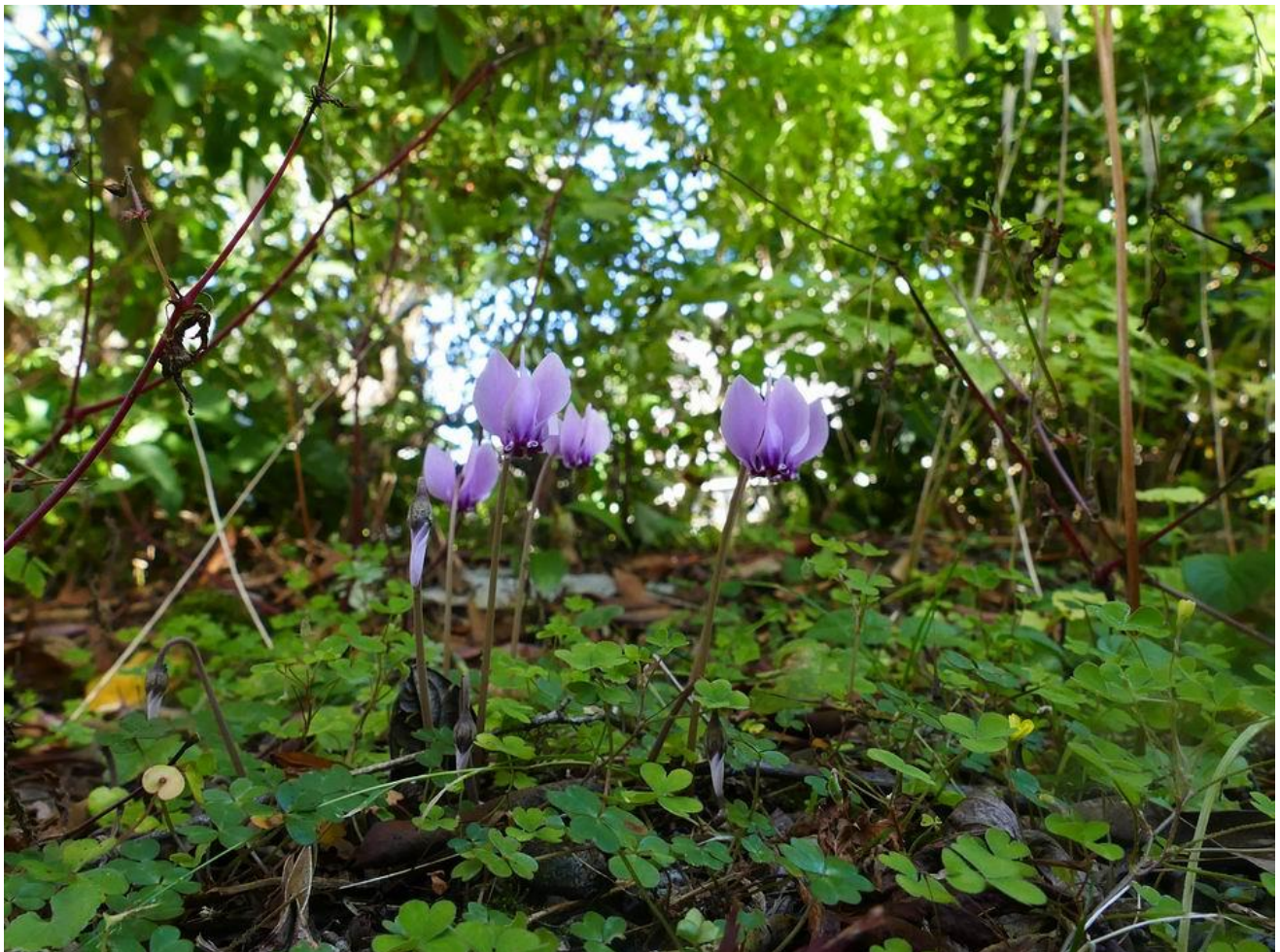


As I was clearing away the old growths I found that I was just in time as I found the first of the **Crocus nudiflorus** flowers hiding amongst the greenery - a sure sign that we are heading into autumn.





**Cyclamen hederifolium** is another welcome autumn flowering plant that is also coming into flower. This time of year is like a play when the curtain closes; the set is changed, and when the curtain re-opens there is a new scene to explore. That is what it is like in the garden through the year - the superstructure remains in place but the plants that play the starring roles change with the season and I get great pleasure in rediscovering them all again.



**Cyclamen hederifolium**





The silver leaves of *Celmisia incana* alongside a white form of *Cyclamen hederifolium*.



*Cyclamen hederifolium*





**Cyclamen hederifolium** flowers are unfurling all around the garden.



These **Cyclamen hederifolium** flowers are growing happily through some **Roscoe** foliage.





In the coming weeks more Crocus and Cyclamen flowers will join in the autumnal scene - in some cases sharing the space with still green foliage, in others taking over as the old growths have died back.



There is still decoration and interest to be found as the old growths change colour as they wither away for the year.





**Cyclamen purpurescens**



It was spotting these **Crocus nudiflorus** shoots emerging through one of the Erythronium plunges, while I was sitting on our swing seat, that I realised it was time to explore the garden and start the preparations for the new season.





Despite the dryness the garden is still very green especially when compared to many further south where they are facing more extreme heatwaves.



I like the garden to reflect the nature that surrounds us and among the plants I pictured on a walk at the Aberdeen seaside were a large population of **Succisa pratensis** growing on the steep slopes leading down to the shore.



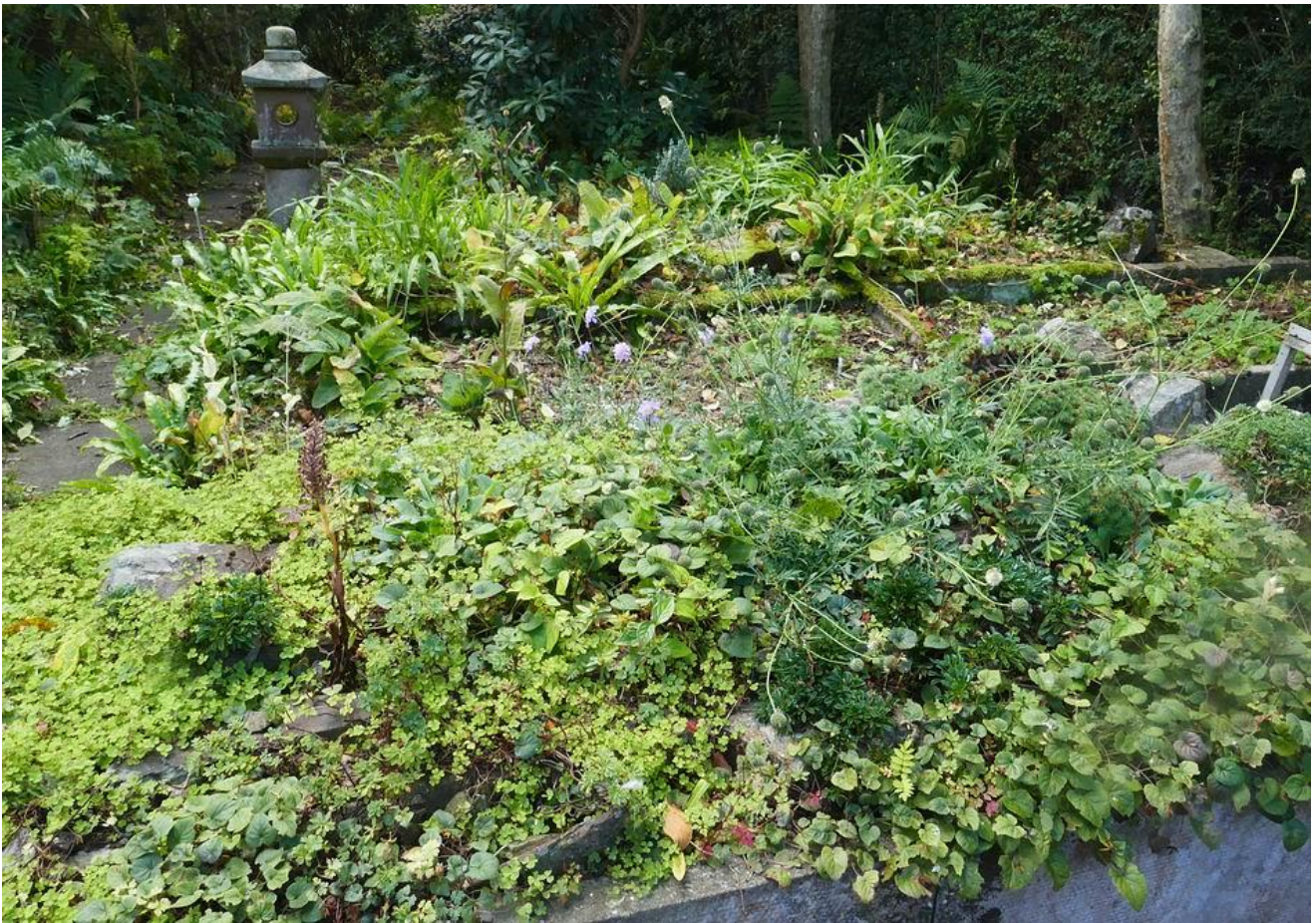


At the same time we have the related **Scabiosa columbaria** flowering in a number of sites including in one of the raised slab beds where it seeds around in the naturalistic planting.



The **Scabiosa columbaria** seedlings display a subtle variation in colour and form that deserves closer inspection.





This view looks across the raised slab bed with the Scabiosa, the erythronium plunge be and the rock garden to the bed beyond, where you may just spot the next plant.



**Roscoea 'Harvington Imperial'** is another of those plants that takes a long lie through the first half of the year only rising through the retreating Dicentra foliage in August.





**Roscoeae 'Harvington Imperial'**



**Roscoeae 'Harvington Imperial'**

I hope that autumn rains arrive waking the bulbs and bringing welcome relief to all the plants in our gardens.....