



SRGC -----

Bulb Log Diary

ISSN 2514-6114

Pictures and text © Ian Young

BULB LOG 03.....13th March 2024





Through the early months of the year small drops of white spread like a rash across the garden - starting out in the warmer areas before appearing in the colder shaded parts of the garden. Yes I am speaking of the Snowdrops which we seem to have quite a lot of. Blooming so early in the year they are a very welcome sight.

A range of species and forms will not only give variety of shape and colour but will also ensure a long flowering

period - the earliest to flower for us are starting to go over while *Galanthus nivalis* forms are yet to flower.



Galanthus plicatus forms and hybrids are in full flower in the sunnier parts of the garden which along with *Crocus* and *Eranthis* are some of the best early bulbs to bring flowers into your garden.

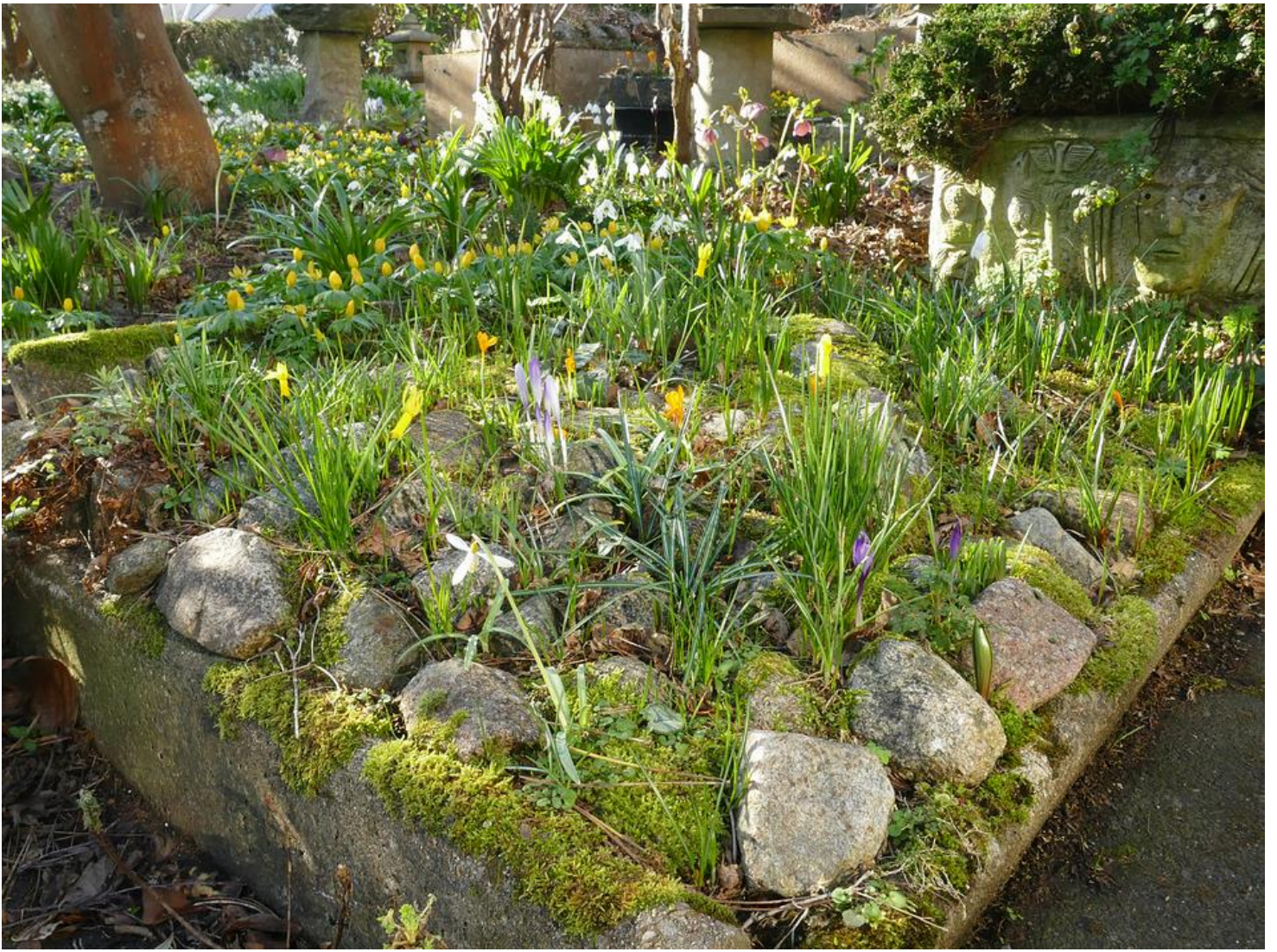


A lot of the time it is too cold or wet to tempt me into the garden so it is important that we can have a good view from our windows. The view that we look out on from the warmth of our sitting room has been carefully developed so that we can see a wide range of habitats and plants then there is also the added attraction of seed feeders, which attracts large numbers of birds, mostly finches, for us to watch.

We feed the birds with sunflower hearts and this year we have seen the number of Siskin visiting swelling to the largest number often over 50 in the garden at one time.

I took both of these images from inside looking through the windows.





The cobble bed, which will be familiar to regular readers, is just over a metre from our back step and we have been enjoying flowers there since earlier in the year. Some of the earliest flowers are fading now but will be replaced by a succession of others through the coming weeks and months. There may seem to be a lot of Crocus leaves without flowers until I point out that these are the autumn flowering Crocus that will

bloom in September/October.



While I encourage you to study the individual plants and flowers in detail it is the visual effect of the combined mass display that I enjoy most. I am pleased with the way I can stand in one place with the rivers of flowers drawing my eyes around the garden the similar colours linking from one area to another just like a great artist uses paint across their canvas.



As I move around and get closer I can observe ever smaller groups isolating them from the overall vision homing in to appreciate a single plant before closing in on the details within in single flower.

While getting down to look at the individual flowers I also enjoy seeing and trying to identify the many seedlings that are germinating.



During the past four weeks the **Eranthis hyemalis** have peaked and as I write some of their flowers are starting to fade but we can still appreciate the plants for some time as the petals wither, the seed pods swell until this annual cycle is completed when the seed is shed and the growth dies back to rest as a tuber until next year.



We should not only appreciate plants when they are in flower, which may only last a few weeks, but pay the same attention to appreciating the leaves which may stay with us to enjoy for months. Also I can enjoy watching the progress of the many surrounding seedlings observing their progress through the years to maturity.



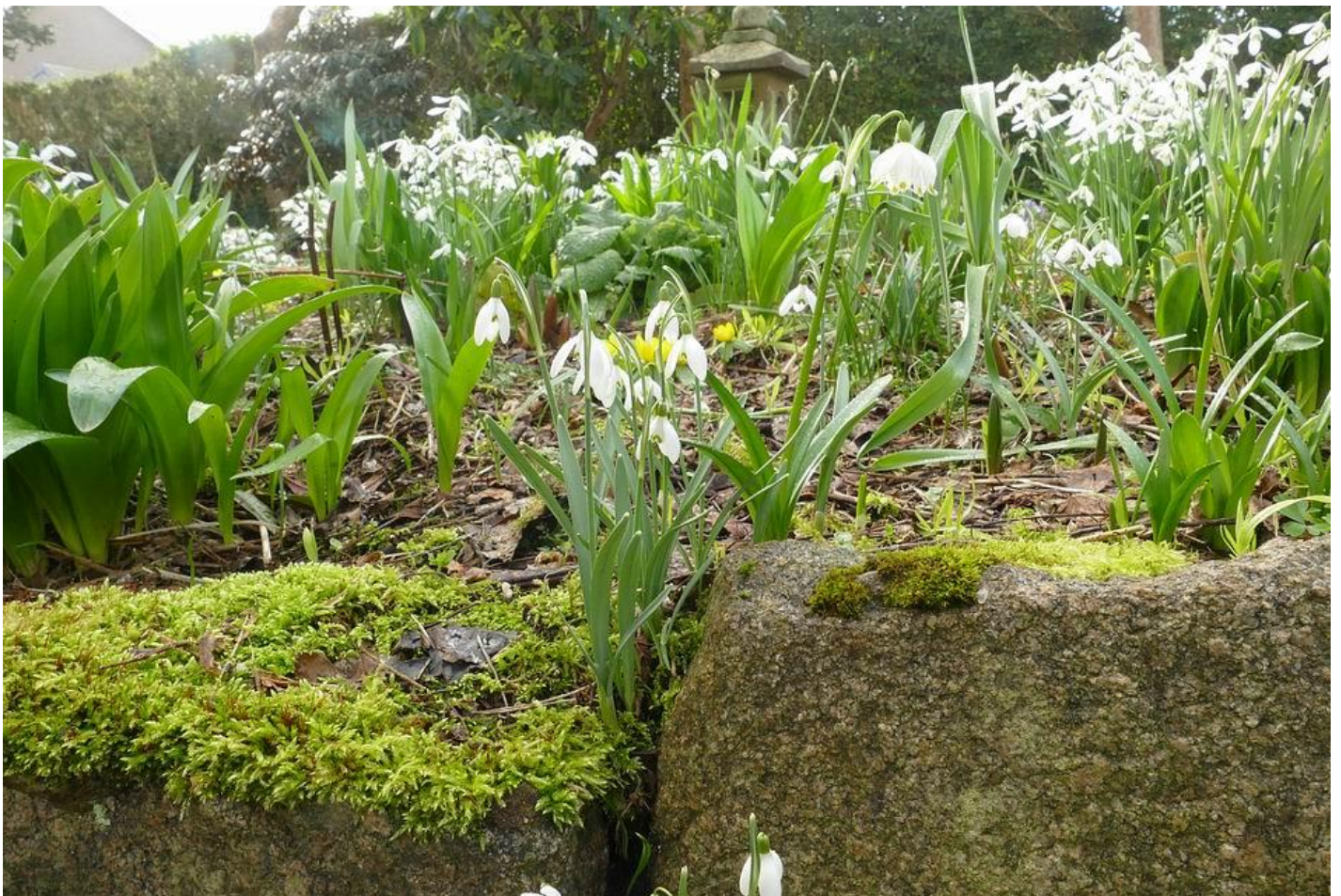
The stunning flowers of **Leucojum vernum** set off against the yellow Eranthis.



If you look carefully you can see seedlings of ascending age from just germinating up to flowering size and it is the aim in our garden to replicate nature in this way and not just to have mature plants.



You may be surprised at where some plants will grow if you allow them to seed around it may not be where you would have chosen to plant them and that brings a further element of excitement as I explore our garden.



I may not have chosen to plant the Galanthus in the narrow crevice between the rocks but by planting itself there it adds to the character of the garden.



In the same way these *Leucojum*, which started out as a single seedling, squeeze themselves into a similar gap.



The *Eranthis* '**Guinea Gold**' flowers later than *Eranthis hyemalis* and here I copied nature by planting the tubers in the crevices of one of the raised slab beds. Many bulbs in their native habitat grow among rocks often rising from a narrow crevice. It depends on two factors one where the seeds randomly fell and secondly that they could get a root hold where they fell.



Due to persistent rain while they were in bud some of these **Crocus abantensis** flowers have become stuck together at the tips needing a bit of help to open their petals.



I like to take pictures that show how plants fit in their surroundings which shows much more than just a close up of the flowers does. Once more these are growing, in a yet to be spring cleaned, crevice bed.



Most crocus such as **Crocus atticus** increase into clumps by means of secondary corms forming around the primary one. To ensure good flowering we need to lift and spread the corms out every three to five years to give them the space to grow and flower.



Crocus herberti on the other hand runs about by stolons spreading itself out nicely like this group flowering through a matt of *Celmisia walker*.



Most crocus such as this cultivar form clumps as secondary corms form around the primary one



While I can enjoy seeing a good flowering clump of bulbs I much prefer seeing them spaced out and seeding around such as these **Crocus tommasinianus**.



And so it is both mixed community plantings along with a range of ages that we try and achieve in the garden.



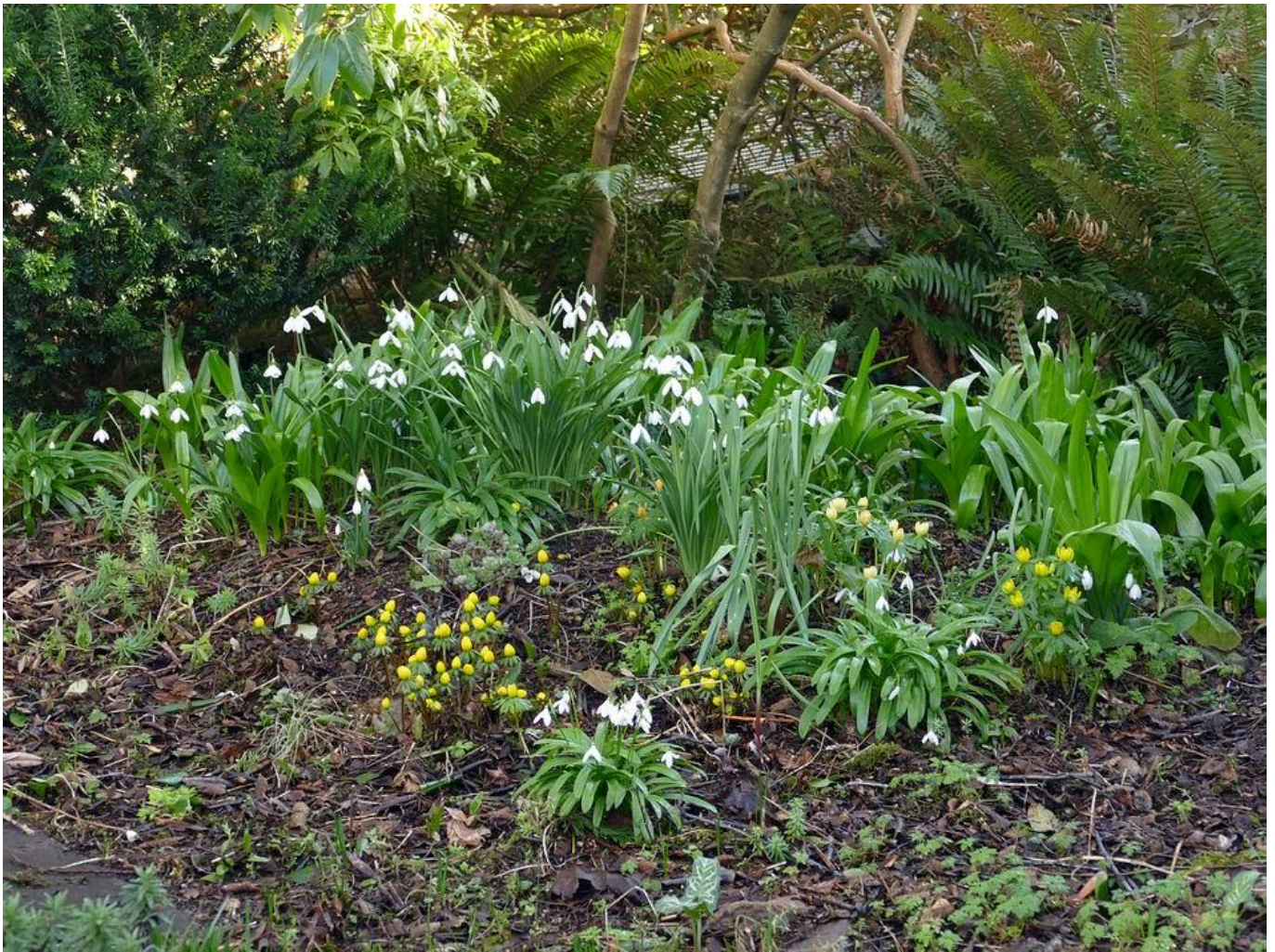
Looking carefully at the many seedlings rising through the mulch I can find variation of form in those of flowering size and masses of promise for future pleasure from this spontaneous natural planting.



I started this bed by planting out pots of mature seedlings and since then it has been allowed to do its own thing.



Eranthis 'Guinea Gold'



Every year is not the same; the familiar plants appear but precisely when they flower is at the mercy of the weather so plants that flower simultaneously one year may flower consecutively another, then there are the surprises from the self seeders.

We follow the same principal of working with nature, by allowing self-seeding, whatever the size of the planting area from larger beds like in the picture above to the troughs. These small **Narcissus asturiensis** and **Narcissus cyclamineus** are currently flowering in a raised bed.





Narcissus cyclamineus



Narcissus bulbocodium and Narcissus confusus.

Although in recent Bulb Logs I concentrate on the garden we do still grow some bulbs under glass and in pots mainly Narcissus which give us flowers through the winter when most plants in the garden are dormant.



A few of Anne Wright's selections from [Dryad Nursery](#) - the large white hoop in the foreground **Narcissus 'Pallene'** with **Narcissus 'Tethys'** behind and the small trumpet form **Narcissus 'Galantoquilla'**, raised by Brian Duncan.



One of our own un-named seedlings stands out from the others.



The creamy white **Narcissus 'Don Stead'** and another good yellow hybrid keep the flowering season under glass going while outside the garden is springing into flower.

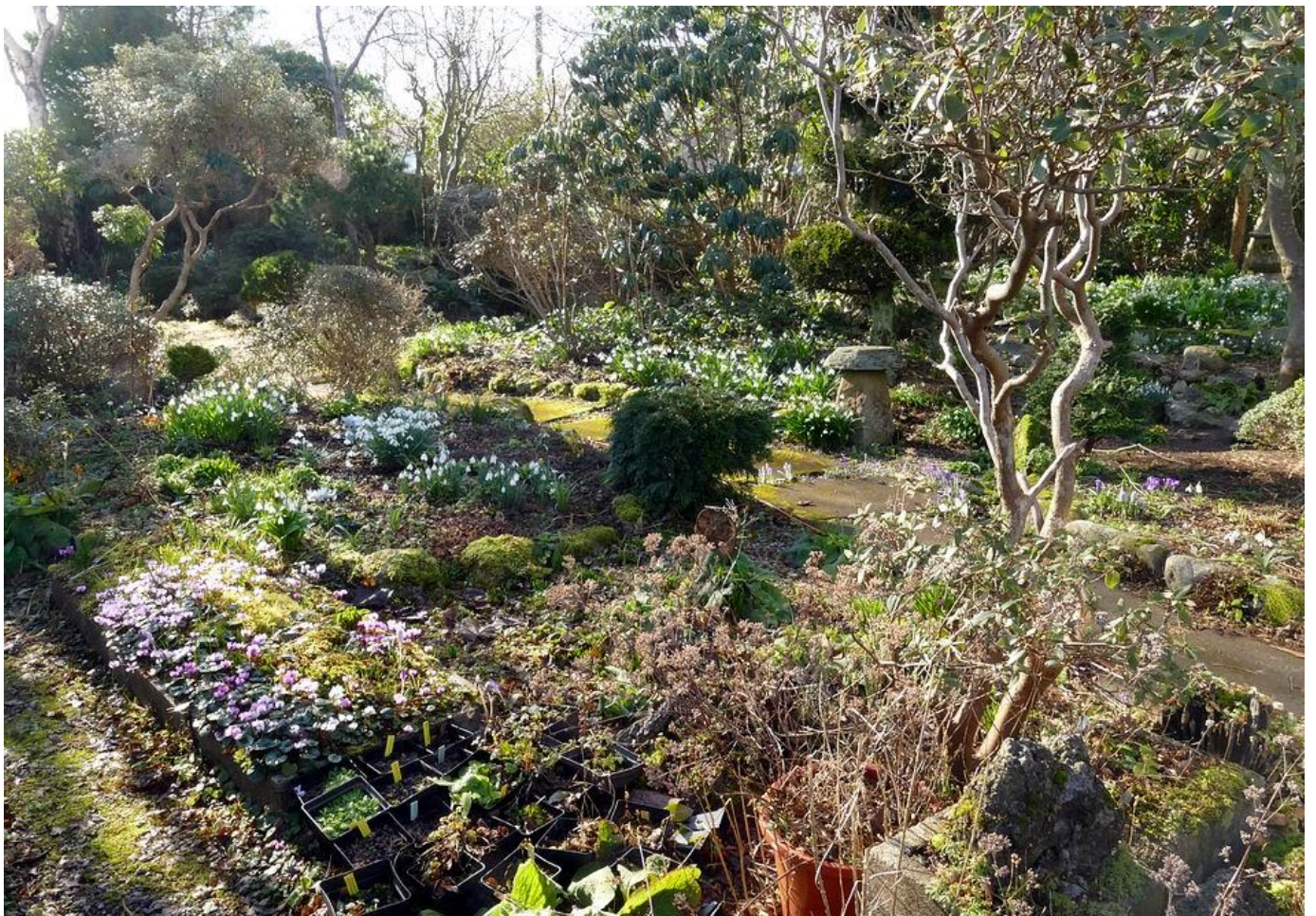


The Erythronium plunge bed represents the growth cycle across the garden. For now it is dominated by **Iris 'Katharine Hodgkin'** and **Corydalis malkensis** which arrived by chance through rice grains or seed, then their growth will be well over by the time the Erythroniums are in full growth - perfect time sharing partners.

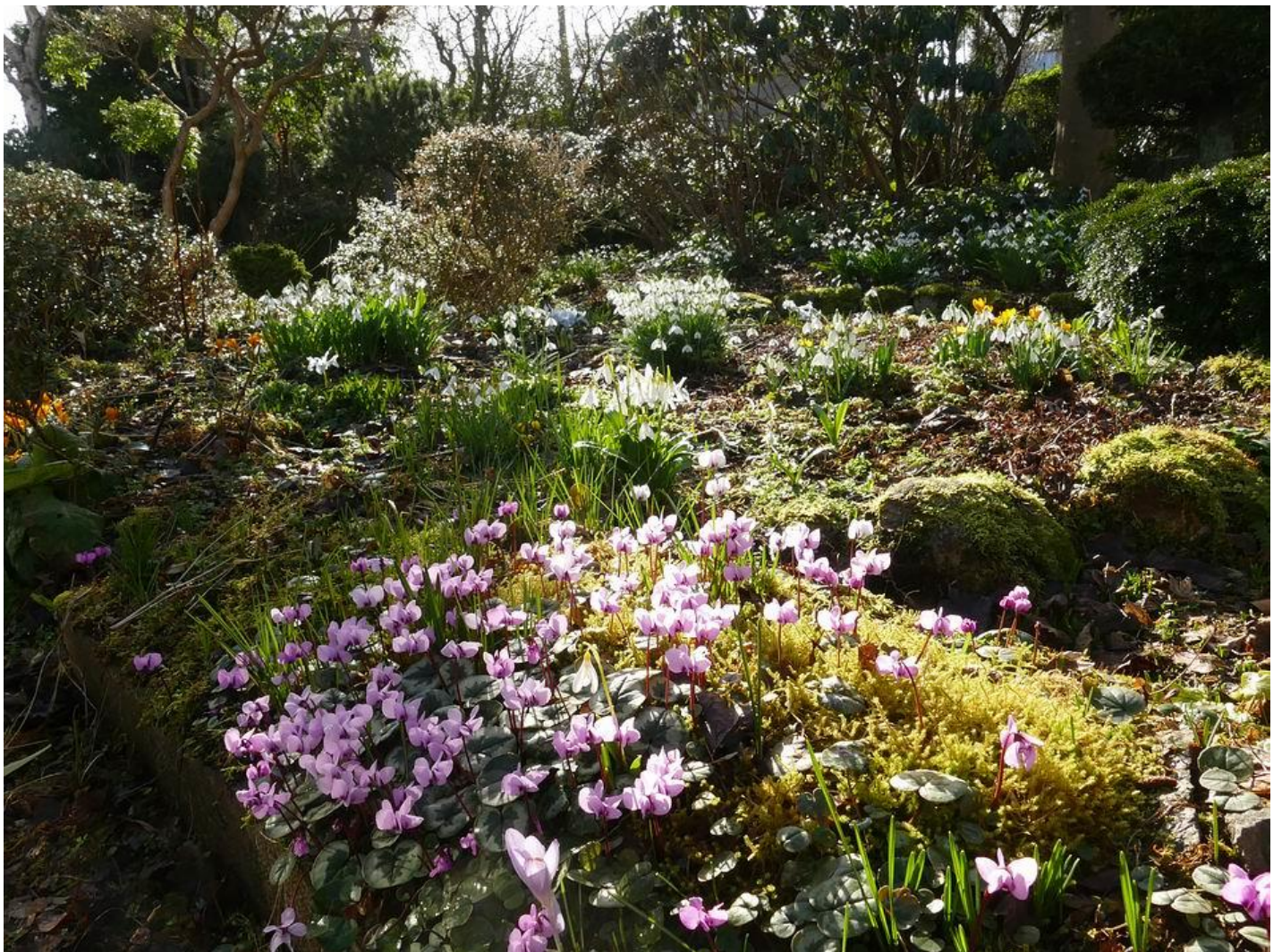


The more freely available old favourites such as **Scilla mischtschenkoana** (above) and large Dutch Crocus cultivars (below) have a place in the garden where they mix in with the more unusual plants we grow.





I will round off this week with a few more views showing the early flowering bulbs. They show how the flowers help link and consolidate the various garden habitats into a unified garden.





Even as I write the garden is changing with flowers going over and new growth emerging.



If you have not seen it already I posted a new [Bulb Log Video](#) a few weeks ago and by next month there will be a different selection of plants to share with you. Spring is such an exciting time.....