



BULB LOG 16.....22nd April 2009



Field of Daffodils

Did I make a quick trip across the North Sea to Holland to see the fields of Daffodils? No this picture was taken around 20 miles South of Aberdeen where a Co-operative of farmers called Grampian Growers cultivate around 1200 acres of Narcissus. The heavy red clay soil in this area makes it one of the best places to grow Narcissus both



for the supply of cut flowers and bulbs. They are planted at a density of around 5 to 7 tonnes per acre. The bulbs are lifted after 2 or 3 years when each bulb has increased to form 2.5 bulbs. 40% of the crop is retained and replanted while the other 60% is sold. Half the crop is sold in Europe and the other half is exported to the USA. It is a beautiful site to see all these fields of yellow as we drive up and

down the main road south from Aberdeen – the nearest fields are just 12 miles south of us.



Narcissus abscissus

The mass planted fields above make this wee group of *Narcissus abscissus* in our garden look rather pathetic. However I am very fond of this species as it has a lot of charm. I grew it from seed and I am fairly sure it is correctly named. It is slow to split and it is in my mind to lift a bulb this year when it goes dormant and chit it to speed up our rate of increase.



Bulb House

While there are still a number of *Narcissus* species flowering in the open garden the majority of the ones under glass are now past that stage and I am pleased to see many of them with swelling seed pods. This does not always mean that I will get seeds from them all – sometimes the pod just swells up and is full of air with no fertile seeds. As the season is advancing and the recent temperatures have been higher than average I have given most of the pots where the leaves are still green a good soaking -this could be the last soaking many of them get this season. I always water each pot individually and there were several where the leaves are already turning yellow so I missed these out as I do not want the bulbs going into dormancy to be sitting in over-wet compost which greatly increases the risk of root rot. It takes a long time for the compost in plastic pots to dry out once the plants have stopped growing.



Narcissus x cazorlanus

This is a naturally occurring hybrid between *Narcissus bulbocodium* and *N. triandrus*.

It is a beautiful plant that is intermediate between the two parents. Among the characteristics it has picked up from *N. triandrus* is it often has two flowers per stem.

Narcissus bulbocodium

Most people are familiar with *Narcissus bulbocodium* as a good garden plant.

The one most commonly seen in the general trade for garden use is *N. bulbocodium* var *conspicuous* but I have a host of other forms some with large flowers on short stems right through the range to others with small flowers on tall stems - I love them all. Many I have only grown under glass until now but as my stocks have increased I am going to plant some of each form I have plenty of into the new sand bed I made in the garden last year.



Narcissus bulbocodium

I raised this pot full from my own garden collected seeds taken from a pot of *Narcissus bulbocodium* *obesus*. When the flowers opened a few weeks ago I noticed something a bit different about them and it took me a minute to pin point just what made them different.



Narcissus bulbocodium

This picture should show you very clearly the lobed corona.

I have not noticed this degree of lobing in any of the *N. bulbocodium* I have grown before.

I would be interested to hear if you have seen this either in cultivation or in the wild.

I am sure that it is not a unique feature but it is very attractive and new to me.



Narcissus bulbocodium var. graellsii

A most unlikely looking variety of *Narcissus bulbocodium* is var *graellsii*.

It has a smallish white flower of delicate proportions with striking green lines running down the tube and up the reverse of the petals.

The style and filaments are also well exerted from the corona.

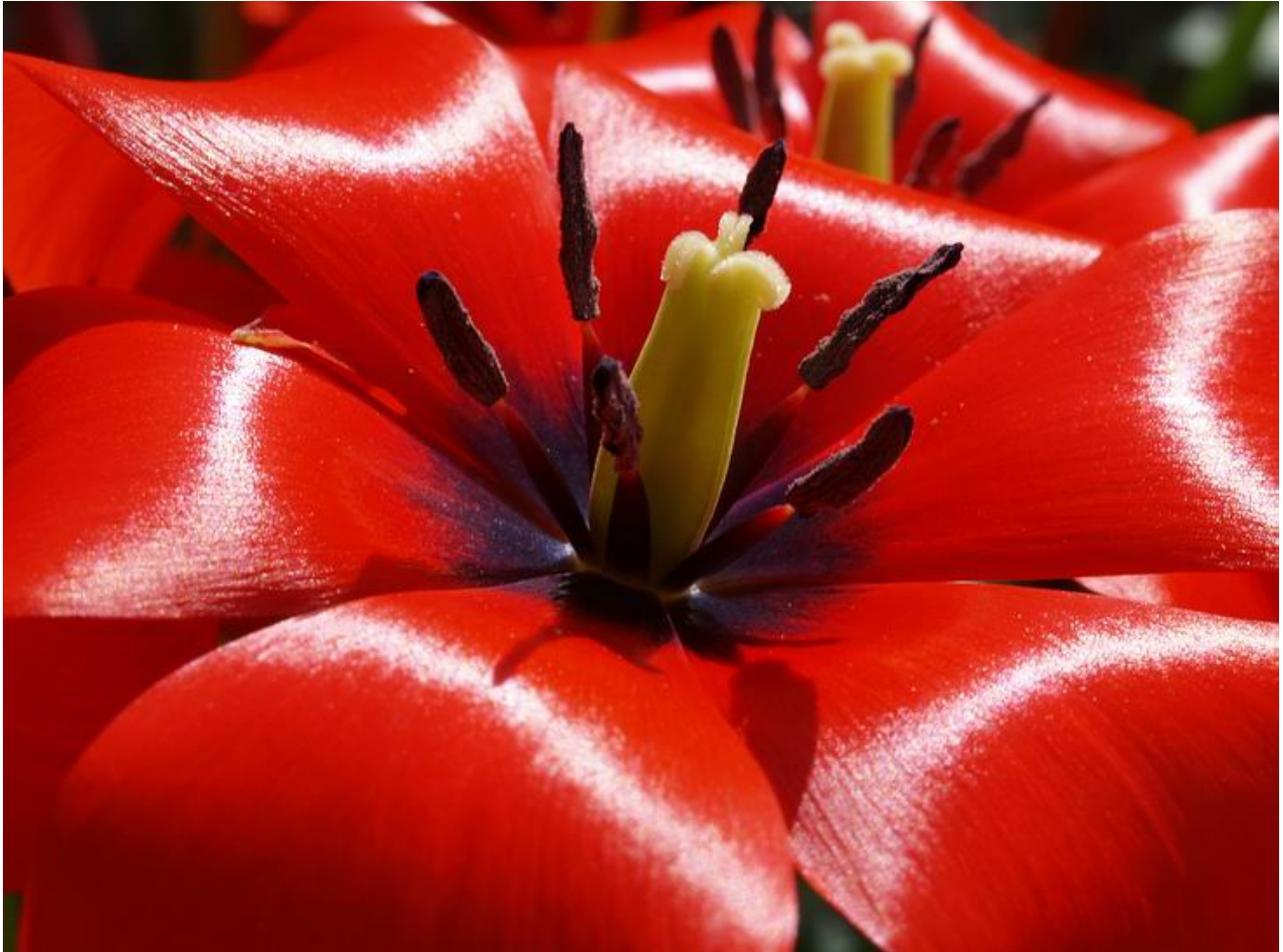


Tulipa linifolia



Tulipa batalinii

A number of my growing collection of tulips are looking beautiful in the sunny days. The bright red Tulipa linifolia is fully reflexed here and the closely related yellow form called Tulipa batalinii group.



Tulipa linifolia

Study the detail of this flower of Tulipa linifolia and then compare it with the closely related T. montana below and see if you can spot the differences. I will give you a clue – look at the anthers and filaments.



Tulipa montana



Fritilaria house

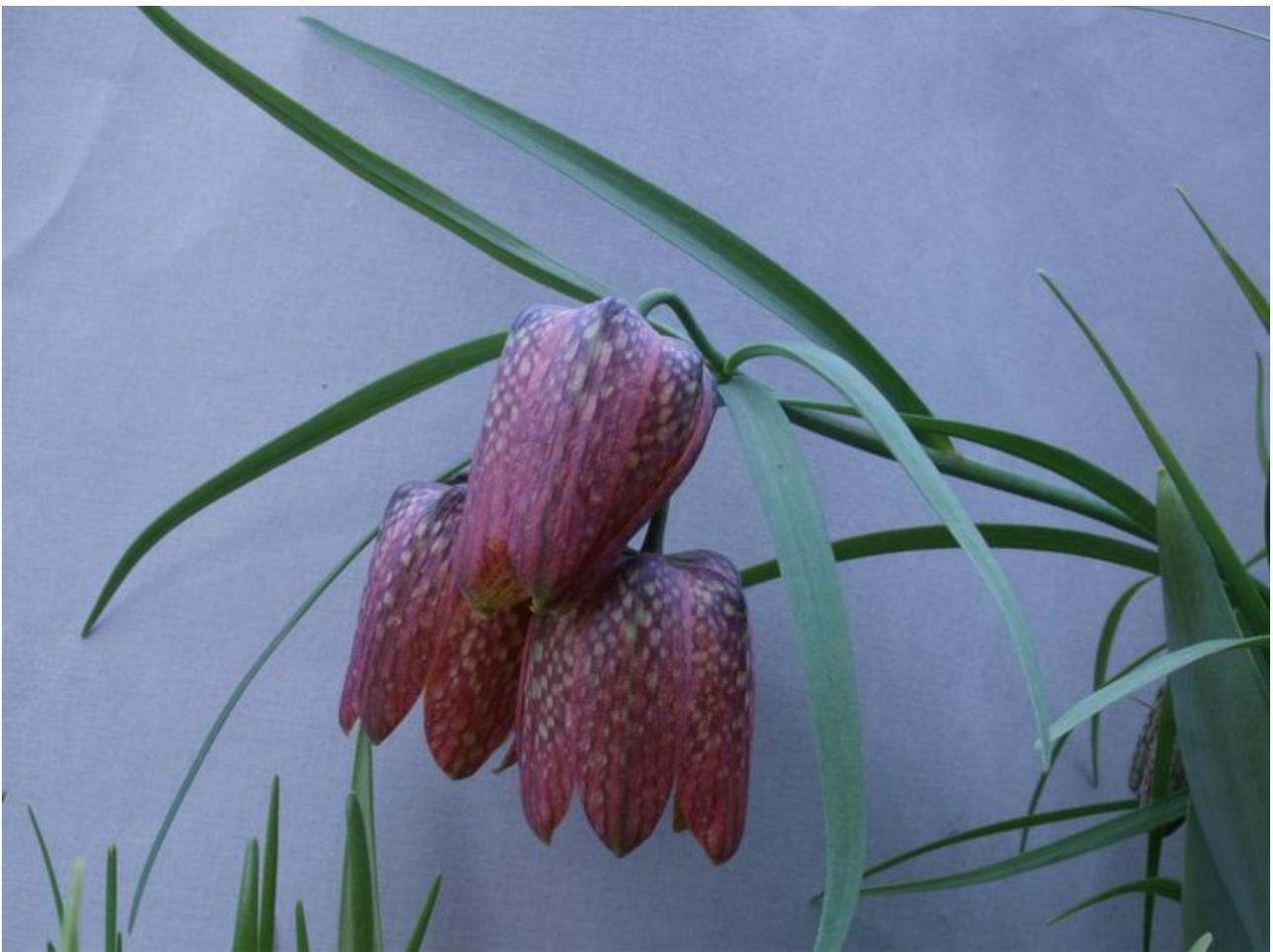
As you can see the Tulips are in the Frit house where a number of fritillaries are still flowering away.



Fritillaria bucharica



Fritillaria yuminensis



Fritillaria orientalis

In the recent past I have shown a number of brown flowers from what I refer to as the Fritillaria Montana Group – many came under the name of *F. orientalis*. I believe this (above) to be the true *Fritillaria orientalis* with these

beautiful checkered flowers and a stem that comes out of the ground at an angle. It is difficult to know for sure as there is a lack of information available in print to properly key out the Fritillaries.



Fritillaria montana

As well as the brown forms of *Fritillaria montana* I also have a few pots raised from seed that have varying degrees of pale green some showing a degree of checkering like the one on the left and another variation below.





Fritillaria tubiformis

Fritillaria tubiformis is a real beauty with some of the largest flowers of the genus on relatively short stems. They also come in a number of colour variations from deep purple like black grapes complete with the overlaying white



bloom to a lovely pale yellow form often called *Fritillaria tubiformis* ssp *moggridgei*. As you might guess from the rather chewed leaves on the examples above I grow these in an out side frame where they are often grazed by snails.

Fritillaria tubiformis Yellow form

This is an interesting yellow form. I call it that because I raised it from seeds collected from darker forms in our garden and the one on the left in the picture above looks to be intermediate between the two so it looks to me like you can get the complete range of colours in a population. Another possibility is that they are distinct sub-species in the wild but they have crossed

in our garden.

Fritillaria cirrhosa

Another seed raised frit this one raised from the ACE collection is the very elegant and primitive looking *Fritillaria cirrhosa*. In the wild this species covers a very large range and is apparently very variable in colour and size. I would love to get more seeds to try some more of that variation in our garden.



Front Drive

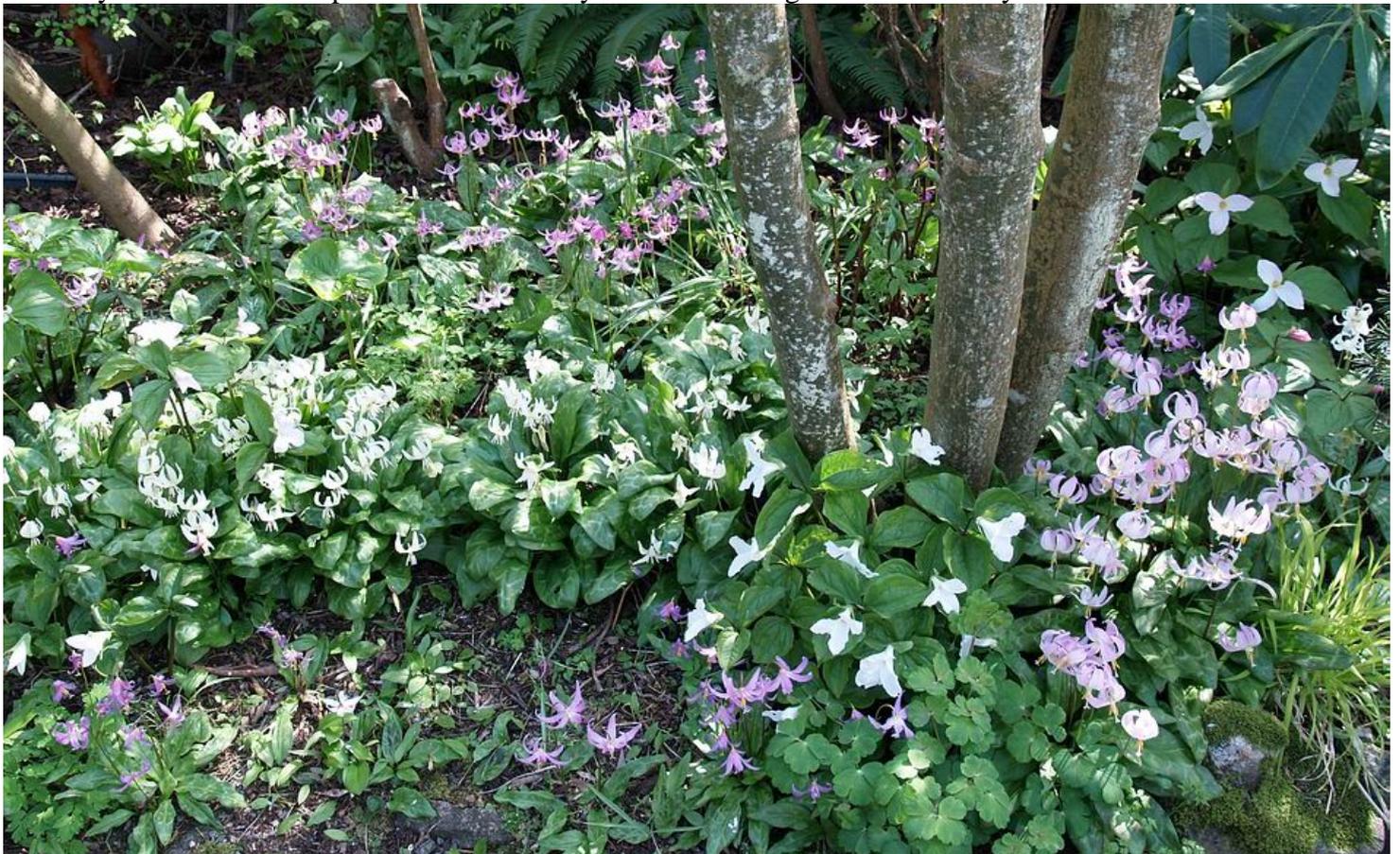
Speaking about natural populations- for about fifteen years or more I have been seeding plants into the gravel sections between the paving slabs of our front drive. Originally I sowed alpines such as *Geranium sanguineum* that were low enough to allow the car to pass over. Then I started to sow bulbs to give us some flower before the geranium came into flower in the summer. I am very pleased with the results as more and more bulbous species are establishing there. There are several generations of *Fritillaria meleagris* well established and every year I help by scattering the seeds along the length of the gravel strip. The number of seedlings of all ages is incredible and if they all grow to flower the drive will just get better and better.

The gravel layer is quite deep and very compacted making it impossible to plant in any way other than by seeds.





Even **Erythroniums** are growing happily in the gravel and they too are self seeding and naturalising in this most unlikely garden bed. I cannot tell you how often these door to door traders have come and offered to tidy up our 'weedy' drive way and tar it over or lay lock blocks - I will not repeat my answer to their offer. I love letting bulbs naturalise this way in the garden and nothing gives me more pleasure than seeing the self sown seedlings appearing everywhere around the parents. I will leave you with the image below of an Erythronium and Trillium bed.



Erythronium bed