



### Troughs

In this week's Bulb Log I have decided to give an update on the progress of the troughs that I made and planted last year see Bulb Logs 3808 and 4108. Above is a picture taken earlier this year of part of our trough area.



### Red sandstone crevice trough

The picture on the left is of a newly planted cement covered fish box trough where I have used a red sandstone to create a series of small crevices. When I planted this trough I just pulled cuttings from a number of saxifrages that we had already growing - some had a bit of root and others had no roots at all and I stuck them into the pure gritty sand that I used as compost. Every single one of them has rooted and grown well as you can see in the right hand picture taken today. The cement of the trough has started to weather nicely and matches the colour of the sandstone very well and there is the just the first signs that moss and lichens are growing on the cement.



**Saxifraga trough**

I hate to see labels in our garden and they look even worse in a trough so I use this method of laying the labels out when I plant and taking a digital picture for keeping a record of the names.



**Saxifraga trough**

I have used a pale sandstone for landscaping this trough and again I have shown how it looked in the spring (left) and on the right is how it looks today showing how the plants have progressed. One of the many good points about this type and size of trough is that I can move them around to different positions. Why would you want to do that? Well it means that I can give them good sunshine in the spring then move them into a shaded position for the summer to prevent the cushions that are susceptible to scorch from being damaged.



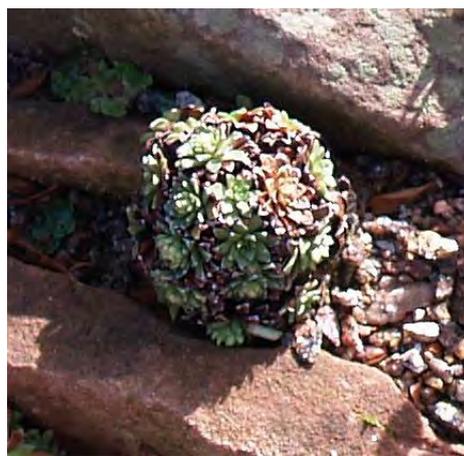


**Sandstone trough**

This is another saxifrage trough that I landscaped with more of the red sandstone . To remind you I used just a gritty sand as compost to both fill the trough and trickle down between the stone crevices. The only supplement that I have added was some bone meal which I sprinkled into the planting hole before planting the small bare rooted plants.



Here again are comparative pictures of this trough taken in flower in the spring and how it looks today.



Saxifraga 'Allendale Bravo' did particularly well while Saxifraga 'Allendale Desire' to be seen as the brown patch in the centre left of the trough has all but died off.



### Campanula trough

While many plants enjoy and thrive in our cool moist climate I struggle with many of the alpine Campanulas so I decided to try some again in this trough. I landscaped it with chunks of a limestone marl, which is like a hard tufa, and again used only sharp sand as compost.



### Campanula trough

The comparative pictures above show that while most of them got off to a good start a number did not survive our 'summer' weather. I will just have to settle for the tougher ones that seem happy and still have a few flowers on.





## Concrete Trough

While I am pleased with how all this series of troughs I made have turned out I am particularly pleased with this one which is not only made from cement mortar mix over polystyrene but all the 'rocks' used for landscaping are broken up concrete blocks.

I was very inspired by the way recycled materials were used in an alpine garden setting on a visit to Utrecht Botanic Garden a number of years ago.



## Concrete Trough

This trough is planted with a single silver saxifrage plant that was big enough when I bought it in an 8cm pot to be pulled apart and make up all the plants you see above.



Granite Trough

The next two pictures are of a granite trough that I carved out of a 200 year old paving slab salvaged from an Aberdeen street where they were lifting the granite paving and replacing it with concrete slabs!!!! The above picture was taken in the spring.



I have continued the recycling theme by using old roofing slates to create the raised crevice landscape that the plants so enjoy. As you can see in today's picture the plants have grown well and are now shutting down for the winter but they will continue to look good.



**New Zealand Trough in the spring**



**New Zealand Trough today**

This trough is planted up with New Zealand plants and I keep it at the front of our house where it has a northern exposure. The plants are growing well but so is the liverwort which is one of the main problems with many of our troughs. To try and combat it I top dressed the exposed compost with moss but this has not been the answer.



Trough top dressed with moss

This is another example of a trough top dressed with moss to try and keep down the liverwort and it does work to a degree. One thing that does inhibit liverwort is covering it over which kills the growth but it does not stop it coming back again. Moisture loving cushion and mat forming plants also enjoy rooting into the moss.



**Liverwort fruiting bodies**

This little forest is a macro photograph of the liverwort's fruiting bodies which produce masses of spores to colonise any suitable ground they will fall on as they drift in the wind.



### **Liverwort splash pots**

You have to wonder at the efficiency of this plant in reproducing itself because not only will it produce spores but the surface is covered in small 'splash pots' each of which contain numerous miniature plants. When it rains and a rain drop hits one of these splash pots the plantlets are splashed out to colonise where they fall.



### **Liverwort on seed pots**

The gravel top dressing on the seed pots seems to be the perfect habitat for the liverwort which is a real pest to control once it gets hold. The only way I know is to remove it physically which I have done a few times this year already but with so much rain the plantlets from the splash pots were spread everywhere and regenerate almost as quickly as I can remove the blanket of liverwort.



### **Moss and Lichen on rocks**

The moss and lichens that grow on the rocks that make up some of the raised beds in our garden show just how cool and damp our weather is in the summer – so it is not surprising that liverworts also thrive.

### **Rhodohypoxis Troughs**

Although I did not show you at the time I moved all our troughs of *Rhodohypoxis* under glass in early October to allow them to dry off before we get hard frosts.

I have been thinking about planting one of this series of small landscaped troughs with a mixture of bulbous plants. I would like to achieve all year round flowering and interest so the plant selection will be a problem. I need small bulbs that will fit in with the modest scale of the trough and that can cope with all the vagaries of our weather.



### **Snow on the Troughs**

Although we have not had any snow yet the ideal cover for the troughs through the winter is snow.

Next weeks Bulb Log will be back in the bulb house where lots of *Narcissus* buds are appearing.