

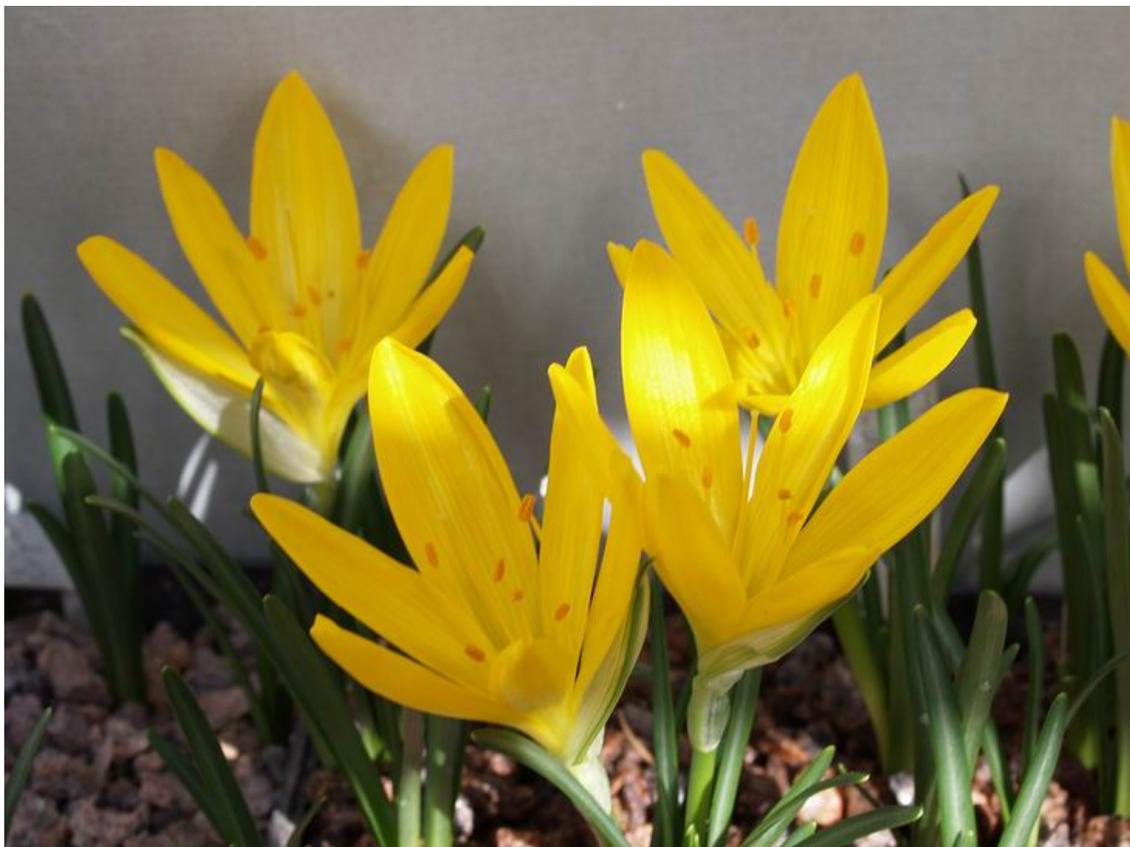


BULB LOG 37.....16<sup>th</sup> September 2009



**Sternbergia sicula**

I do think that I can claim some success with this form of *Sternbergia sicula* which is flowering better than before. I will continue my trial of planting so the nose of the bulb is just covered, plus feeding with potash in the autumn as the flowers fade as well as in the spring to see if I can get even more flowers from a pot of bulbs.



**Sternbergia sicula**

It is my pleasure when looking into the bright yellow flowers as they open in the warm sunshine that drives me to try and find a cultivation method that will give me regular and reliable flowering in our cool northern garden.

How envious I am when I see the pictures in Paul's Wisley Log of these plants flowering in outside beds at the RHS Wisley Gardens.

I suppose that envy is reversed sometimes when

I show pictures of some of the bulbs that Paul struggles to keep happy in the hot Wisley summer which are perfectly happy in the cooler moist summer conditions of our garden.



**Rhodophiala bifida**

A remarkable rate of growth is very obvious in this plant as all this growth has appeared in less than two weeks since I watered the bulbs. This is where the store of energy in the bulbs comes into play as it provides the super-charged power from the store of starches that surround the embryo leaves, stems and flowers that all formed before

the bulbs went dormant last spring/summer.

It does not take long before the striking red flowers open fully in the sunshine.

Autumn flowering bulbs are often wrongly described as 'late flowering'. As the flowers formed in the bulbs last spring before the bulbs went dormant they are actually early flowering and it is the ones that wait until spring before they send up their flowers that are really the late flowering bulbs.



**Rhodophiala bifida flowers**



## **Crocus vallicola**

If there were only two bits of advice I could give, it would be to raise your bulbs from seed and to study (enjoy) them carefully when they are in flower.

I have been raising *Crocus vallicola* – one of the bulbs that enjoy our cooler conditions – for many years and have quite a lot of plants both in pots and in garden beds.

Most of the seeds in the last ten years have been from our own garden grown plants and so have been self selecting over the generations to those that are

most suited to our conditions. As I was enjoying them I was also looking carefully at the variation that has developed.



## **Crocus vallicola ?**

When I looked into this individual I found that the typical two yellow spots at the base of the floral segments had formed into more of an inverted 'v' shape a bit like that found in *Crocus kotschyanus*. I then began to wonder if this was just part of the variation found in *Crocus vallicola* or has it hybridised with *C. kotschyanus*?



**Crocus vallicola**



I am now going to show a number of pictures showing the flowers: pay particular attention to the variation in the style - the colour, the shape and the length.





Brian Mathew does describe this as a variable species but as the style is used extensively as a diagnostic in describing *Crocus* can all this variation be found in *C. vallicola* or have my plants started to hybridise?



***Crocus vallicola* and *Crocus speciosus* x *pulchellus***

Here is one *C. vallicola* in the sand bed beside another probable crocus hybrid which could be a cross between *speciosus* x *pulchellus*.



### ***Crocus speciosus* x *pulchellus***

This crocus has confused me for a number of years; it has the typical white pollen and yellow throat of *C. pulchellus* but the style is more like that of the seed parent *Crocus speciosus* ssp *xantholaimos*

I suspect *C. pulchellus* to be the pollen parent as it is the closest related species that the pollen could have come from. The only other contender would be *C. kotschyanus* and I do not know if they will hybridise.

I would welcome any comments and suggestions on the bulb log feed back pages of the forum.

Copy and paste the link;

<http://www.srgc.org.uk/smf/index.php?board=9.0>



### ***Crocus speciosus* ssp *xantholaimos***

The flowers of this *Crocus speciosus* ssp *xantholaimos* have taken a bit of a battering and been knocked over but they still look pretty and add colour to the autumn beds.



**Crocus nudiflorus 'Orla'**

The first flowers of *Crocus nudiflorus* 'Orla' are open now but they also suffer a similar fate. They tend to etiolate as they try to find better light levels than our northern latitude can offer making it difficult for them to stand upright in any wind or rain.



**Crocus nudiflorus 'Orla'**

'Orla' has a slight colour wash when it first appears but this quickly fades leaving a pure white flower



**Crocus banaticus**

Above and below is the same *Crocus banaticus* flower, the first for this year in our garden, the only difference being that, in the lower image, I used a grey card to remove the distracting background.





### **Colchicum agrippinum**

Now for a series of pictures of the many Colchicums that are appearing around the garden.

I do know the name of the one above which is the beautiful tessellated Colchicum agrippinum which has the advantage of not having the very large leaves that give Colchicums a bad name in some people's minds. I do not agree and think that the large, usually glossy, green leaves are attractive as well – you just need to choose the best place to plant them.



### **Colchicum laetum**

There seems to be a number of plants that masquerade under this name and there is some discussion as to which is the correct one. This is the most often seen form with the long narrow tepals forming a starry shaped flower.



**Colchicum autumnale**

Not many bulbs produce as many flowers from a single bulb as Colchicum autumnale.



I don't have a name for this pretty **Colchicum** is but that does not stop me enjoying its presence in the garden.



**Colchicum speciosum album**

The large white goblet shaped flowers of Colchicum speciosum album



**Colchicum speciosum album**

Most Colchicums form clumps quite quickly and to get the best from them they should be lifted and divided every three to five years.

This weekend I am speaking about woodland bulbs at the AGS Conference 'Down in the Woods' and I hope to see some of you there so I will leave you now with two more forms of the variable C. speciosum.



**Colchicum 'Water Lily'**

Not to everyone's taste is the multiplex form of C. 'Water Lily' which to my eye is a bit untidy but I still keep a few in the garden.



**Colchicum speciosum dark form**