



BULB LOG 21.....25th May 2011



Aberdeen Show

Despite our worries and the early season the Aberdeen Show on Saturday was a great success with 200 members of the public paying to come in plus around 100 Members : it was a busy day in the show hall - every one of our Show Team works so hard to make this a successful day. We have had more plants on the benches and hope to have more in coming years but we still put on a lovely display for the public.

Our contribution to the benches was a display of how to make and plant up troughs where we showed a number of troughs in varying stages of completion plus a five minute power point demonstration of how we make them by covering a fish box with cement – it seemed to be popular and I hope a few people will now try it themselves.



From this



to this.



In the last few weeks I have been making some more of these troughs as more permanent replacements for some of the painted fish box type that I use for *Rhodohypoxis*. I wrote up how to make that type of trough in BulbLog 3808.



Trough

Here is an update on how the trough I planted up with *Androsace* cuttings is doing.

As you can see they are growing very well and producing many runners each of which could become a cutting if I require.

You can also keep this type of *Androsace* more compact by removing the first lot of runners which will stimulate the plant to produce a second set on shorter stems.



Cassiope wardii x fastigiata

This rather old plant of *Cassiope wardii x fastigiata* is becoming very brown and woody at the base making it less than attractive. It is a typical growth pattern for these plants which in the wild would have to grow up through other plants such as grasses so the lower leaves just start to go brown after a few years.



Cassiope wardii x fastigiata



Most years I would trim back the growth to just below the lowest flowers as they fade – this encourages side shoots to come lower down and keeps the plants looking green to the ground. I failed to do that last year and as this is quite an old plant I decided that more drastic pruning was necessary so I have cropped it back to just a few centimeters from the ground.

This should result in new growths appearing from below ground and rejuvenating the plant – I will keep you posted.



Cassiope wardii x fastigiata cuttings

The prunings are not wasted as I make a heap of cuttings by removing some of the leaves from the best green tips to expose the stem and trim off the top most growth to encourage rooting and branching.



Cuttings

This is a good time of year as the plants enter their period of most active growth is a wonderful opportunity to take a lot of cuttings. The vigour of the plants will mean that they should root well provided you have the means to keep the soft growth alive – that is where a mist unit comes in handy.



Mist Unit

The mist unit keeps the cuttings constantly moist and turgid, allowing me to give them plenty of light and warmth at the base to encourage new roots to form.



Cassiope wardii x fastigiata

Young plants are always more floriferous and it is well worth the effort of keeping a steady supply of young plants coming along as well as trimming back the old growth after flowering.



Cassiope wardii x fastigiata flowers



Snail damage

When I first saw the damage on this *Fritillaria imperialis* stem, which has been completely denuded of its leaves, a moment of dread hit me as I thought that the dreaded Lily Beetle may have reached this far north.

However closer inspection confirmed that the creatures with the ravenous appetite for my frit leaves was not new to us but was one of our regular pests - the garden snail.

In the moist evening I removed a heap of them from what remains of this stem.



Young snail

Round holes with a beveled edge in leaves are typical signs of snail attack as this picture of a young snail, with a still soft shell, caught in the act illustrates.



Paris japonica

No plant is safe: in fact they often go for the choice and most desirable plants first – you can see here that the ‘petals’ of this Paris japonica have been nibbled. We should not be surprised - if you were offered the choice of eating from a regular supermarket or a top delicatessen offering worldwide delights which would you choose?



Bulb bed

As the season progresses this bulb bed enters yet another phase of growth with the *Uvularia* just starting to open its yellow flowers and the tips of the *Arisaema* starting to push upwards.



Corydalis pseudobarbisepala

The fantastic *Corydalis pseudobarbisepala* has appeared again with more stems than last year but I have not found seedlings germinating around the plant from the seed I missed collecting last year.



Corydalis mucronifolia

Here is the first flowering of *Corydalis mucronifolia* in our garden. I got a small plant two years ago: last year it just managed a small clump of leaves but now it has survived the ravages of our winter and come back big enough to produce its wonderful blue flowers on relatively short stems. The stems would be more compact than they are if the plant did not have the competition of the early spring bulbs that share its space. As soon as it is large enough I will start to split it but not until I try and get some seed. This species is lumped by some in with *Corydalis flexuosa* but as a grower I do think it is different and deserves its specific status.



Corydalis mucronifolia



Corydalis hybrid

This is one of the many *Corydalis* hybrids that appear around the garden most likely it is a seedling from *Corydalis* 'Craigton Blue'.



The other blue flowers that self seed around the garden are the *Meconopsis*: this is the one we all know as *Meconopsis betonicifolia* which we are now told should again be called *Meconopsis baileyi*.



Meconopsis betonicifolia

Whatever name you decide to use it is a wonderful plant that here takes over in this bed as the spring bulbs are going back underground. We normally read that *Meconopsis* should be planted in a moist, shady humus rich spot but in our garden they tend to place themselves in the free draining gravel mulched beds – perhaps they have not read the books.



My final picture for this week is of one of our raised beds where the smaller *Dactylorhiza* contrast well with the *Phloxes* and *Petrophytum hendersonii*.