



BULB LOG 31..... 1st August 2012



Erythronium bulbs

I took advantage of the few dry days we have had this week to make a start on lifting and splitting the Erythronium bulbs that I grow in the plunge baskets. The one on the left shows clearly how they will take themselves down deeper into the ground if they find conditions too hot or dry. The remains of the roots indicates where the base of the flowering stem was with this bulb pushing deeper while the other two bulbs from the same basket appear happy at their planting depth.



Last year I had to abandon my attempts to divide the Erythroniums because the cool wet summer had encouraged them to start to root and this year I have found the same thing has occurred. Ideally I would like to split these each year but more realistically I achieve this every second year. I fear that damaging the emerging roots will do more harm to the plants: I will have to leave them for yet another year. If we get the same weather conditions next year I will cover these plunge beds as the Erythronium leaves start to go back which will allow them to dry out and hopefully prevent the early rooting.



Cyclamen purpurascens

Even though as I write we are only coming to the end of July there is a distinct autumnal feel to the weather and the garden. The appearance of the deliciously scented *Cyclamen purpurascens* above and *Cyananthus lobatus* below usually indicate the high summer temperatures are declining . This year those high summer temperatures- I use that term relatively speaking -we would hope for in the North East of Scotland have been noticeable for their absence.



Cyananthus lobatus



Hypericum reptans

Hypericum reptans is another flower that I associate with the ending of summer and it flowers all the way through until the frosts will eventually become hard enough to send the plant into a winter dormancy. The evidence visible in the chewed petals of the lower flower shows that our population of slugs and snails are also thriving in the cool moist weather.



Hypericum reptans

I cannot understand why this plant is not more widely grown as it is superb value for the length of the flowering season alone. The form we grow has wonderful red markings to the reverse of the petals which makes the buds very dramatic as they develop.



Lilium martagon

The effect of the weather has caused a compression of the seasons with the mid summer flowers such as Lilium martagon still in full bloom as those plants I associate more with late summer into autumn are starting to bloom.





Primula florindae

The pictures above and below show some of the colour range that we get from the self-seeding *Primula florindae*. The farinose nature of the flowers makes the interior appear paler than the outside giving a wonderful contrast within each individual plant which is then improved by the lovely range of colours from deep red through oranges to yellow. Like the *Cyclamen purpurascens* these flowers have the most beautiful scent which in the case of the primula wafts through the air filling the whole garden with scent.





Sedum and Sempervivum Trough and conifer

You may wonder why I am showing you these apparently uninteresting containers? Well, there is a reason if you look more closely.



Trough



On close inspection you will see the trough has been 'colonised' by this lovely wee Campanula (whose name I cannot remember). It is a charming plant that we received from a friend in the 1980's when we were in our prime showing mode. I tried hard to get a good looking specimen in a pot to impress the judges but to no avail – then I lost the plant. Like many a Campanula it is monocarpic, biennial in nature, and unknown to me seed had been shed into an outside plunge where I had the original pot. For a number of years and with no help from me plants appeared in this sand plunge before they seemed to disappear altogether. After a few years they turned up in the most inhospitable hot dry and impoverished location surrounding the base of this conifer in its container where it has persisted for years. Last year I noticed the distinctive rosettes as the plant made the jump across the gap and now we can enjoy its flowers there. I do not mind where it goes next as long as it continues to grace our garden by choosing its own location.





Slab Bed

Friends and family have always thought it ominous when they see me sitting down – what is he thinking of doing now? After years of appeals from Maggi, this May I eventually succumbed to her request for a swing seat. I had never seen one that would not dominate and look out of place but I liked the design of this one and because of the bad weather it was reduced to half price.



I have to admit that it is very relaxing to sit swinging gently as I look out over the garden.

The slab bed in the foreground of the view from the swing seat has been annoying me for a while but alas time to sit and contemplate got to me and I had to act.

In the years since it was landscaped the surface had sunk a bit and now looked flat and uninteresting to my changed and, I think improved, taste: this allied with the demise of a dominant plant in that half of the bed left me no option but to set to and try and improve the look from all angles; especially the view from the swing seat.



The arrangement in one half of the bed was quite satisfactory with a large plant of *Petrophyton hendersonii* dominating the previously highest spot towards the middle so I decided not to disturb it but to try and blend that side in to a new improved layout in the other half,



First I piled up some used, very gritty, bulb potting mix to create height then re-laid the original stones which were laid out in three parallel lines to imitate natural strata then replaced the original stones over the new hump. Maggi was not too sure when I said I was going to use broken concrete blocks to make up the rest of the outcrop but I think I convinced her with my idea which was for a seam of granite penetrating a limestone outcrop.



I used sharp sand to finish off the hill and fill in the gaps between the stones that will provide planting places and spent some time washing this in with water.



It will take a while to get sand washed in to all the smaller gaps but eventually rain and weather will fill assist me and I will gradually be able to plant up the new outcrop. Unlike the TV instant garden makeovers I am in no rush and am happy to plant with small cuttings which I will take later in August or even scatter some seeds into the smallest cracks.



In place of the flat bed that I started with I now have a number of aspects. As the viewer you are looking south so this end now offers a shady northern exposure ideal for some of the Saxifrages that do not want to be in full sunshine with a sloping side exposed to the east, a steeper western side and a slow slope faces south.



I had a number of small Saxifraga and Androsace cuttings which I have carefully planted and give the new section some 'instant' greenery.



I know from my successful experiments using broken building blocks in troughs that the plants love it and after a year it is hard to know that I have used an artificial material at all. These saxifragas will soon settle into their new home.



I have replaced some of the plants I lifted back into the gentle south facing slope along with some Townsendia seedlings that were ready to be pricked out of their seed pots.



I can now sit in the swing seat and enjoy the vista; happy that not only have I improved the view, at least to my eye, but also created a better range of environments for the wee plants we love to try and grow.