



BULB LOG 06.....8th February 2012



Corydalis malkensis

Despite the recent cold snap which has frozen the ground, the signs of spring are all around. Early rising stems of *Corydalis malkensis* are already appearing but, depending on the weather, it will be around a month before they really get going en mass.



There is some purple showing in the flowers on this one and I am not sure at this stage of growth if it is pure *C. malkensis* or a hybrid between that species and *Corydalis solida*.



Galanthus sandersonii group

Growing very happily in pure sharp sand in my latest small sand bed is a good yellow form of the snow drop where the stems, ovary and internal markings are all a sickly yellow. I understand that with so many very similar yellow forms around that these are now called the Galanthus sandersonii group.



Fritillaria seed

Many of us are currently receiving our allocations from the many seed exchanges and indeed our North American Rock Garden Society packet dropped through the letter box last week. We have received a wonderful selection from NARGS and I am especially pleased to get *Fritillaria pluriflora* as it was one of the casualties of the severe cold last winter and we lost

both pots that we had. Normally I would store the frit seed until the optimum time window of August/ September before I sow them but others have reported that they get quick germination of the North American species sown now so I will try it out this year. If it does not germinate by May/June I will dry the pots out and keep them under glass, only watering them again in September.



Fritillaria pluriflora seed

When I am sowing a relatively small quantity, in this case ten, I will take the time to both space them out and slip them into the compost with the pointed end down. This will optimise the chance of germination and minimise the risk of the seed rotting by sitting flat on the surface and collecting water.



Fritillaria autropurea seeds

I am also delighted to get another chance to raise *Fritillaria autropurea*. I have germinated it before, about 20 years ago, but did not manage to keep it going long enough for it to reach flowering size. Also I am so pleased to get such a generous amount of seeds in a packet – other seed exchanges please take note if you have large quantities of some seeds then give us plenty in a packet and not just five or ten seeds. With this amount of seeds I do not place them individually but I do work them into the compost to some extent so that at least some of them are on their sides.



Fritillaria seed germinating

These Fritillaria seeds were scattered directly onto the surface of an outside sand bed last September. This is exactly when the mature bulbs are starting back into growth after their summer dormancy and the seeds are also pre-programmed to start to germinate around this time. This is what I refer to as ‘the optimum time window’ and in my experience sowing then will always give the best germination results. Notice how the growth emerges from the pointed end of the seed – hence it is best, if you have the time and patience, to set it into the compost pointed end down.





Fritillaria seed germinating

The emerging radical probes around heading downwards until it has found its way into the ground- there it will grow down to some depth, often well in excess of 7cms, and the young bulb will form almost at the bottom of this growth – see far left. Once anchored into the ground the shoot will be able to grow upwards to form the first leaf. To remind you of how I decide which bulbs to sow deeply and which to surface sow; I first work out how the seed would be dispersed in the wild. Frit seed is wind distributed so it has evolved to germinate on the surface pushing its radical down into the ground so that its new bulb will form at some depth. Insect distributed seeds such as Narcissus, usually identified by the presence of a fleshy appendage, germinate in a different way with the new bulb forming just where the seed lands- see left. If you surface sow this type of seed it will still germinate but

the young bulb will spend its first year sitting on the surface just under the gravel top dressing where it is very vulnerable to predation and more extremes of temperature and moisture levels. It will only start to work its way down into the compost in its second year and will take two or three years to achieve its preferred depth – by sowing it deep in the first place you save the bulb all this effort.

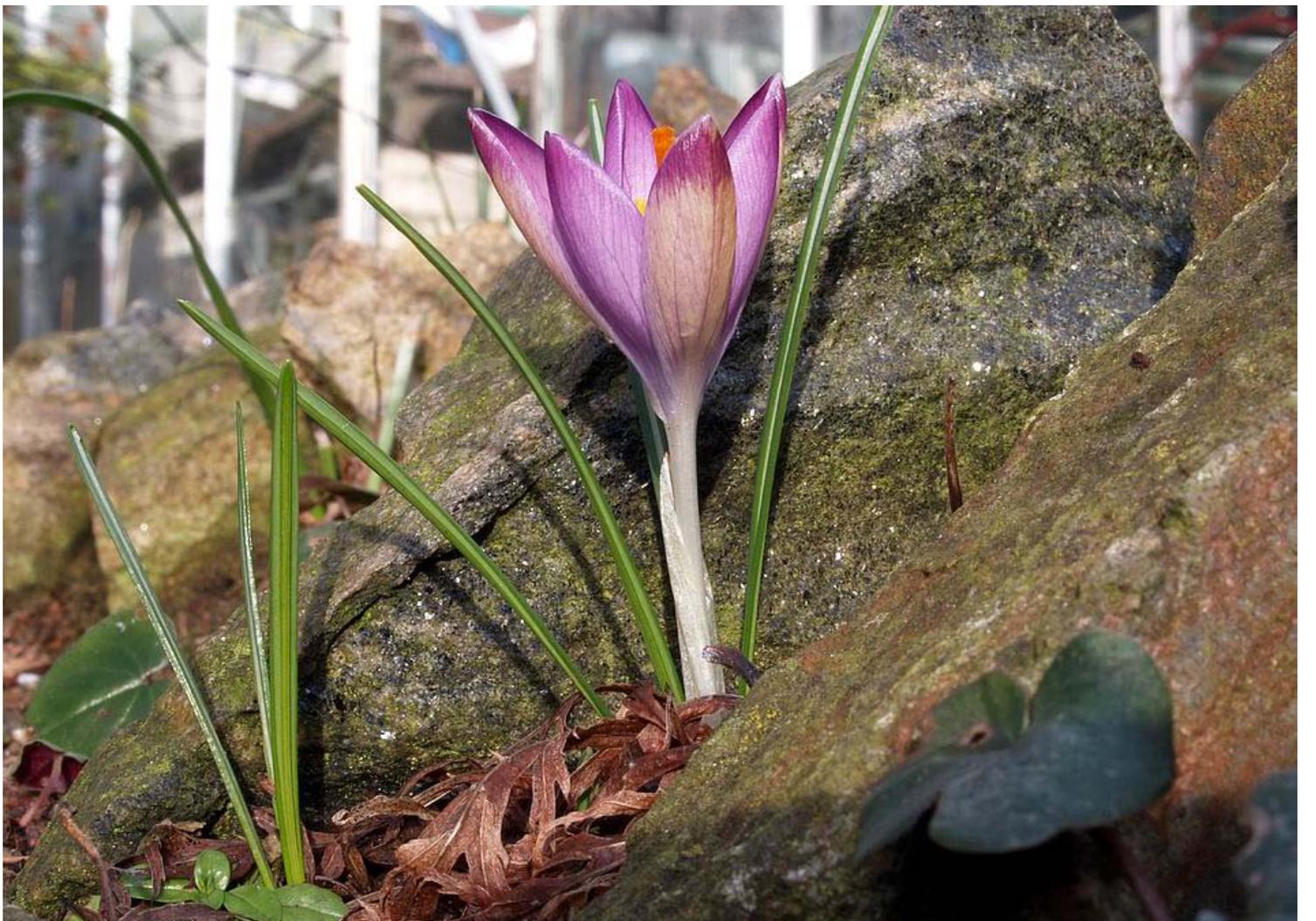


Crocus civijicii and Fritillaria

There are plenty of bulbs like *Crocus civijicii* appearing in the sand beds now and soon I will know what this frit is.



Sand bed



***Crocus tommasinianus* seedling**



***Crocus biflorus* ssp *alexandri* seedlings**

Moving into the In the bulb house I find that despite the many pots we lost last winter we still have a number of crocus coming into flower number



Crocus fleischeri



Crocus danfordiae

The biggest majority of the crocus that survived last winter were raised from seed in the last ten years reinforcing my belief that the best way to build a good collection of bulbs is by raising them from seed.



Crocus abantensis and a purple tubed Crocus chrysanthus

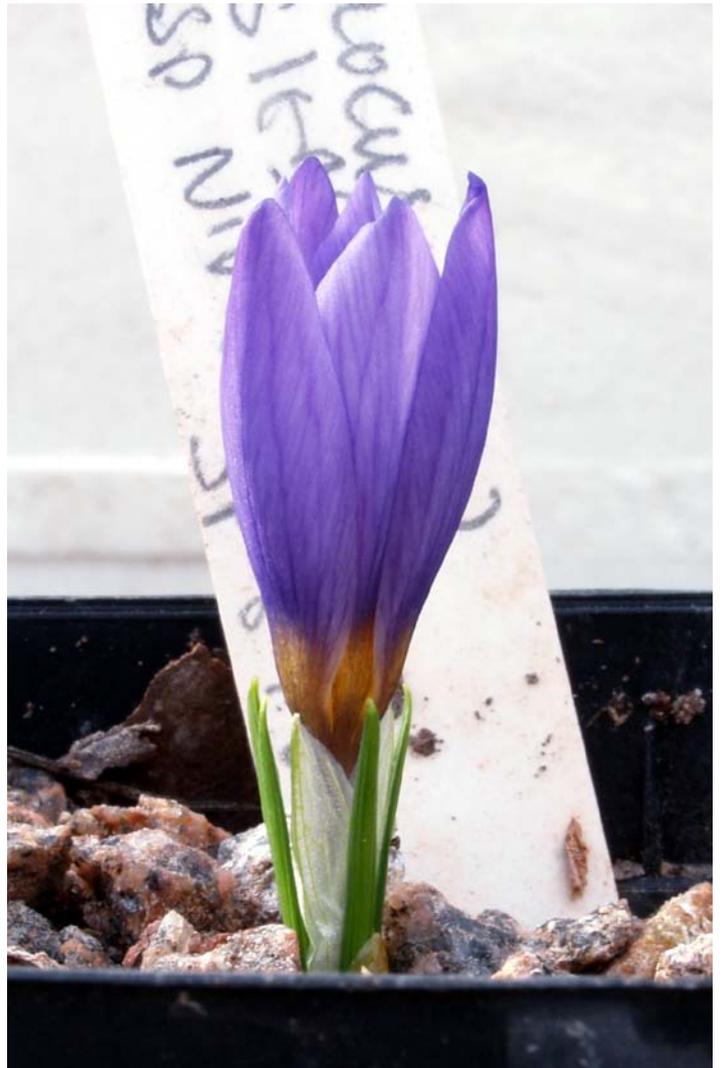


I have this pot labelled as *Crocus medius*, which it is clearly not, and now I have to work out what it is so any suggestions from the *Crocus* experts would be appreciated.



Crocus sieberi* ssp *sieberi

I have never found *Crocus sieberi* ssp *sieberi* to be that hardy in our conditions even under cold glass. More often than not I lose it to cold wet conditions that cause rotting off of the new forming corm. However again it is my recent pots of seedlings raised from our own garden seed that are proving the most resilient under our unfavourable growing conditions. I have shown below a few of the variations that I have found in the markings within a single of seedlings.



Crocus sieberi sieberi

Crocus sieberi ssp nivalis

According to Janis Ruksans book on Crocus the bulb I have grown as *C. sieberi nivalis* should now be *C. atticus* ssp *nivalis*. This is the lone survivor after the ravages of last winter and again it is a seedling raised from our own seed.