



BULB LOG 24.....12th June 2013



A view showing how our front garden is crammed full to overflowing with mostly shrubs and trees and is now at that stage of maturity where we really do have to take some serious action. Over the course of the summer I plan to remove a number of shrubs and a tree to open up some more areas which allow us to reinstate the under-plantings that we lost as the shrubs grew, with bulbs and herbaceous plants.



Many shrubs and conifers are described as ‘dwarf’ or ‘compact’ which gardeners tend to take as meaning that these plants will always remain small. This is not the case; for a start the size stated often refers to the size the plant will achieve after ten years of growth – some of the plants in our garden are now 40 plus. You have to understand that these terms are relative to the size of the normal tree or shrub’s ultimate size which in the case of conifers could be a 20 metre high forest tree. The compact part of this *Berberis* refers more to the tight congested growth rather than the ultimate height which in this specimen is approaching 2 metres high.

***Berberis* × *stenophylla* ‘Corallina Compacta’**



I just love the effect we get from **Galium odoratum** running all through our front garden shrubbery - the light green foliage topped by clusters of small flowers like the white foam on a green sea bring light and colour into the shade below the shrubs.





Rhododendron yakushimanum is one of the shrubs that reach out from under a *Sorbus cashmiriana* to create this magnificent floral display for anyone passing by – this is one that is definitely staying in place when we revamp.



Rhododendrons are also a major feature in our back garden where they provide much of the structure providing height in a relatively flat garden and dividing it up into sections so that you can never see the whole garden from any one point. The flowers above belong to a beautifully scented **Rhododendron decorum** which, like the majority of the plants in the garden, we raised from seed.



While the effect is to look like one large *Rhododendron decorum* it is actually two seedlings planted together - looking carefully you will see the subtle differences, this one for instance has a pink tip to the style.

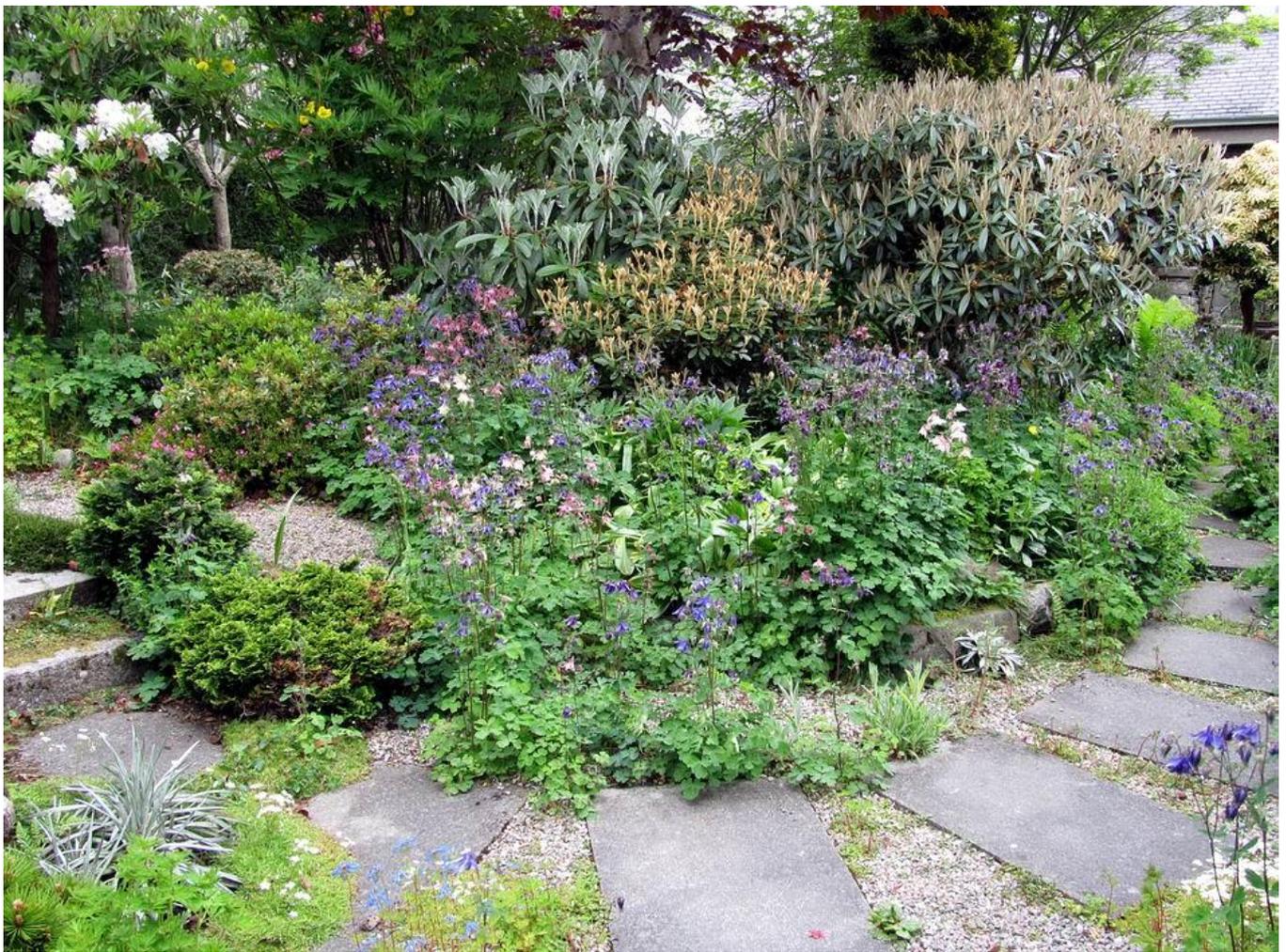


Rhododendron uvarifolium

R. yakushimanum* x *tsariensis

R. elegantulum

Many gardeners choose plants for their flowers which may bloom for a week or two so always consider the longer term and select for foliage as well. Rhododendrons offer a very wide range of foliage in size, shape and texture.



I do not want to be the tallest thing in a garden – I want to be hugged to the ground, surrounded by a canopy of trees and shrubs without which our garden would be flat and uninteresting with no shape or form to frame the under-plantings.

The picture above shows how the plants are flowing out from the beds under the shrubs and seeding themselves around the gravel areas to create beautiful plantings that we would not have created on our own. The decisions we make as the gardeners is whether we will allow the self seeded plants to remain in situ, move them or in some cases, weed them out.

Paeonia ludlowii grows to around three metres tall and as we do not always collect the seed, it seeds around all over the place. If we let all these seedlings grow on the garden would become a peony jungle so we do lift them. Fortunately these seedlings are very amenable to being lifted and transplanted successfully at most times of the years and we are always offering garden visitors a plant or two freshly dug to take away and be given a new home.

A few more of the Paeonia that we grow are in flower just now and can be seen in the pictures below.



Paeonia ludlowii



Paeonia delavayi



Paeonia emodi above and Paeonia cambessedesei below.





As the flowers of *Fritillaria pyrenaica* in the background are going over those of ***Fritillaria camschatensis*** are just coming out. Those above are the Alaskan form which usually display some degree of green on the petals while those below are of the darker Asian forms.



Fritillaria camschatensis



Trillium sessile

Trilliums are another of our favourite plants and also self-seed around when allowed to. This brings problems sometimes in identifying the resulting seedlings and I think I have the correct names for the following plants.



Trillium kurabayashii ? seedling

Interesting colour forms appear and we also have to consider hybrids with so many species growing in a small area.



Trillium rugelii

Some Trilliums are less showy as they shyly hide their flowers under their leaves.

These are ideal plants if you have a steep slope or a high wall - allowing you to look up under the leaves to see the flowers.

In our garden we have to be content with getting down low or using the camera to capture these hidden beauties.



Interesting plant combinations offer many picture opportunities such as being able to use the double white **Trillium grandiflorum** to highlight the flower of **Paris polyphylla** which might otherwise go unseen. The pale yellow flowers of **Uvularia grandiflora** add some colour along with the many shades of green.



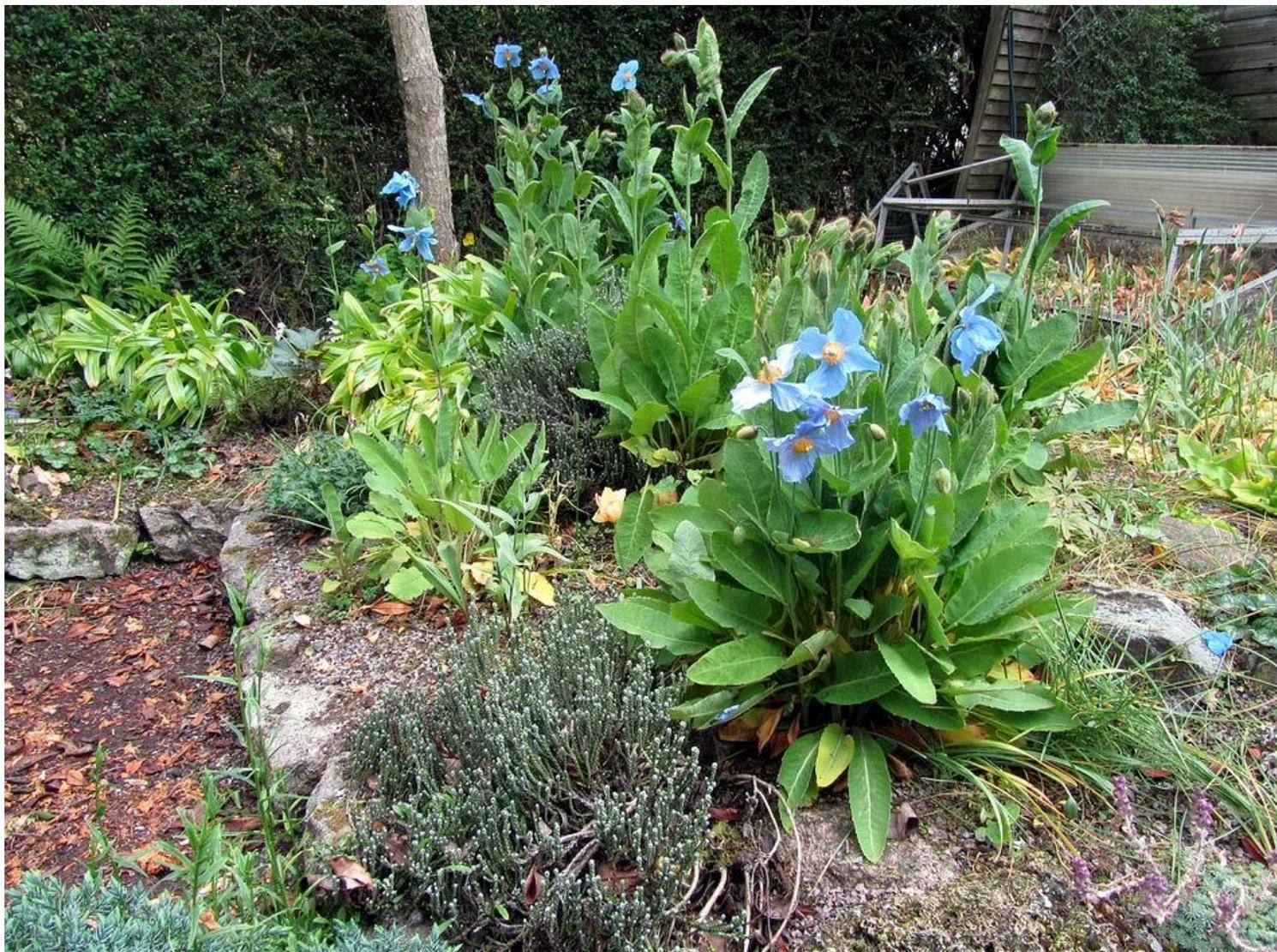
Disporum flavens

Flowering for the first time in our garden, thanks to a kind friend who gave us a division, is *Disporum flavens*.

There were three distinct shoots when I was given a root division of this Korean plant so I separated them out and now have it in three places around the garden.

When we get a new plant I always like to hedge our bets by planting it in more than one position in the garden. Each of these sites will have its own slight variation of growing conditions and micro climate – this gives us a better chance of succeeding in the long term.

All three plants are up and growing well with the largest two in flower now the smallest was just a bit too small to support a flower this year.



Meconopsis seedlings of the betonicifolia persuasion (or baileyi as we are now supposed to call it) seed around all over our garden. They are growing happily in places where we would never have thought to plant them like in this gravelly dry rock bed.



Like all seed raised plants variations occur and the last three pictures for this week show differences in flower shape and colour allowing us to choose those that most appeal to our own tastes.

The cross shaped blue flower has an appeal as do the broad overlapping petals of the next picture below.



Less appealing to my taste are the occasional purple forms which I dead head as the flower fades so they cannot seed and take over from the glorious blues.....