



Narcissus romieuxii



Like many in the UK we are under big black rain clouds making the days very dark and far from ideal for taking pictures. Even so, still more Narcissus flowers open bringing a ray of sunshine to brighten our days. While I like to take portrait pictures of individual flowers I think my favourite images are the ones that show the range of colours from sharp yellow to white.



Narcissus eualbidus

The pure white flowers of *Narcissus eualbidus* always attract my attention and in many ways they are like a smaller version of *Narcissus albidus* below-



Narcissus albidus occidentalis

Apart from the size of the flowers the main difference that I can see between *Narcissus albidus* and *N. eualbidus* is that the anthers of the former are contained within the corona but fully exerted in the latter.

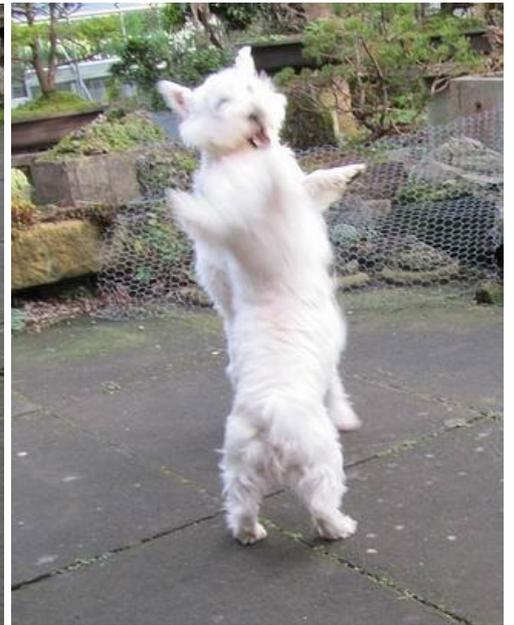


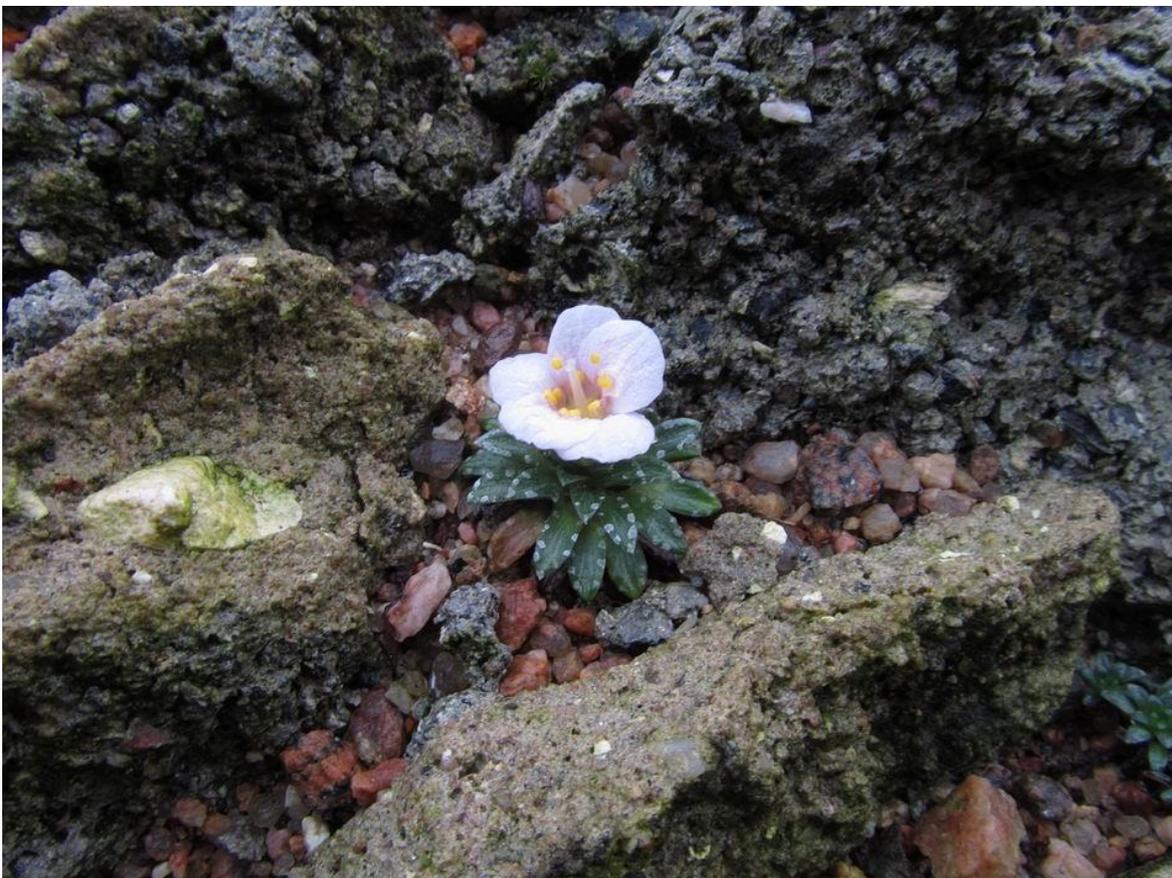
Narcissus albidus occidentalis



Molly and Megan

Talking of wee white beauties – the other thing that brightens our days are our Westies. We get so much fun watching eight year old litter sisters Molly and Megan playing; fifteen year old Lily enjoys sitting with us watching although she does join in the canine fun for short spells.





I am very fond of troughs and they are a very popular way of growing small plants – even if you do not have a garden you can have a trough. At the moment I am finishing off an article on troughs for the ‘Rock Garden’, the SRGC journal, so they are very much in my thoughts plus there is an active thread on the forum where methods, thoughts and questions are shared. The trough above was planted up last August with unrooted cuttings taken directly from

Saxifrage plants – all look healthy and like they are rooting with one even displaying a flower. Many would say that I should remove this flower so as not to weaken the plant but I am happy to enjoy the flower as I am sure there is sufficient root formed to support it plus, with all the rain we are getting, there is no shortage of moisture.



Two more images of troughs showing how I use broken concrete blocks- landscaping them to create height well above the edges of the trough. These saxifrages provided me with the cuttings shown above.





Eranthis flowers and seed germinating

We did get a few dry days this week and I took full advantage to get of mulch spread on the beds before the bulbs push through. It is easy to spread the mulch just now but when the shoots of the bulbs emerge it becomes a much more difficult task.





The mulch we spread is our own compost made from the shredded prunings of the trees, shrubs and hedges – it provides humus and nutrients that feed to soil which in turn will feed the plants. This provides most of the nutrient for the garden plants and we will only add other fertilisers if a plant indicates that it is suffering a shortage - and this is not often – then we try and work out what element the plant is short of adding the most appropriate fertiliser.



The mulch should be at least 5-7cm deep anything less just has a decorative effect without any significant long term benefit to the soil or the plants.

We do not have enough compost to mulch all the beds to this depth so I decide which beds are most in need of such a mulch.

On the left the bed in the foreground has been mulched but we ran out of compost so the one over the path will have to wait until next year.



Some plants such as *Dicentra cucullaria* and *Dicentra formosa* have swollen roots/bulbs that grow incredible near the surface – you can see both the loose scales of the former and the creeping rhizomatic root of the later exposed by erosion in this picture. I used to replant the bulbs of *Dicentra cucullaria* when I found them on the surface placing them deeper in the ground – but I have learned that they only flower freely when the bulb is almost on the surface. It would seem that they have evolved to capitalise on nature’s mulch of falling leaves moving up to grow in the nutritious annual harvest of leaf mould.



Eranthis hyemalis

The first *Eranthis* flowers are well advanced, they develop underground so that when they do break through the surface they are already showing plenty colour.



Eranthis 'Orange Glow'

There is a swell of interest in this superb genus and many forms and cultivars are being discovered and distributed, we have a few such as Eranthis 'Orange Glow' formally known as E. 'Aurantiaca'. We just acquired this form last year at the SRGC Early Bulb Day in Dunblane which takes place in a few weeks, on Saturday 15th February, it is well worth a visit.



Eranthis 'Pauline'

We also got Eranthis 'Pauline' at the 'Early Bulb Day' a number of years ago and now also have many seedlings, which come remarkably true in colour to the parent.



Eranthis pinnatifida

On the left is our original plant of *Eranthis pinnatifida* with a pot of seedlings raised from its seed flowering alongside. Even if you only have a single plant you should get seed as these plants are self-compatible but as with all plants you will see a greater fertility if you cross fertilise different clones – hence the paint brush in the foreground which I am using to spread pollen between the pots and flowers.

If you enjoy *Eranthis* you will be interested in this month's [‘International Rock Gardener’ \(IRG\)](#) which is entirely devoted to a survey of *Eranthis* in cultivation by Wim Boens, one of our Flemish members - it will go online on Friday. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish all my friends in the [VRV, Vlaamse Rotsplanten Vereniging](#), the Flemish rock garden club, congratulations on their tenth anniversary and I send my best wishes for the next ten.



Erythronium japonicum seeds germinating brings great excitement as I anticipate the wonderful flowers to come in around five years time.....