



BULB LOG 46.....12th November 2014





Last Tuesday I took off from a wet grey day in Aberdeen to fly, via Amsterdam, to Gothenburg.



It did not take long for the pilot to gain altitude breaking through the cloud level into beautiful sunshine and as we flew across the North Sea I was mesmerised by the ever changing beautiful clouds as shown on the opening page. Also watching the flight screen that displays details such as altitude and temperature I was struck by how important clouds and our lower atmosphere are to keeping the surface of our planet inhabitable. The outside temperature went down to minus 40 centigrade at our maximum altitude of around 12,000 metres. It also shows why our night time temperatures fall more on clear cloudless nights, especially in winter.



Standing are three of my hosts Henrik Zetterland, Johan Nilson and Mats Havström ,who looked after me so well during my short visit, while Thomas carries on with his work of creating a new peat and rock bed.



These large Swedish type peat blocks are very different to anything we get in the UK. It is much younger peat and much more like compressed sphagnum moss also it can be harvested in a sustainable way taking around 40 years for the harvest site to re-establish much like the period for forestry to regenerate. Unlike the much older hard peats we see in Scotland the Swedish peat has

wonderful properties which can be seen in the older beds where Shortia seedlings grow and self-seed as weeds!



Colchicum atticum

The weather in Gothenburg was wet much like I left at home so I had little opportunity to walk around photographing the garden. We often experience similar weather systems which is not surprising as we are on approximately the same latitude; Aberdeen at 57°9'N with Gothenburg 524 miles east at 57°43'N .

I did spend some time looking around the glass houses where I found a number of Colchicums in flower.

I was very taken with *Colchicum atticum* which, by the spits in the floral tube, would have been known as a *Merendera* before they were combined into a single genus.

Just look at the number of flowers you can get from a single bulb.



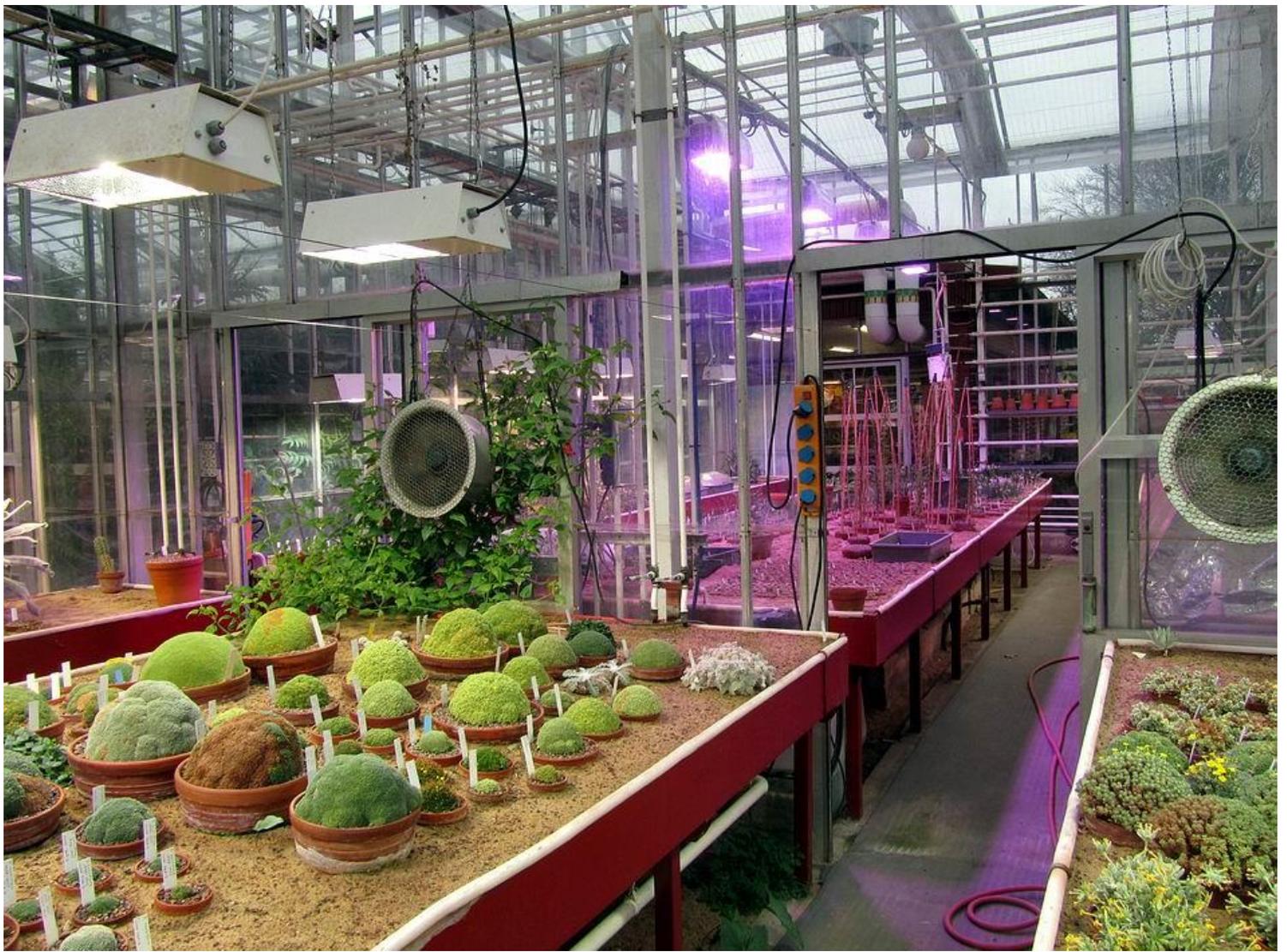


Colchicum chimonanthum

The lower parts of the floral segments of *Colchicum chimonanthum* are fused to form a floral tube like most of the *Colchicums* we grow, as are those of *Colchicum stevenii* shown below.



Colchicum stevenii oligophyllum



Gothenburg glasshouses

You may have detected a strange glow in the picture above which is from the new lighting system that they are trying in Gothenburg. It has been developed to provide the best light spectrum, high in UV and low in infra-red, for healthy growth of plants.

The picture above shows two sections of the glasshouse; the nearest with the cushions has conventional light system while the one beyond has these new lights. To the eye the pink lights do not look so bright but as I walked through into that area my eyes were dazzled by the intensity of the light.



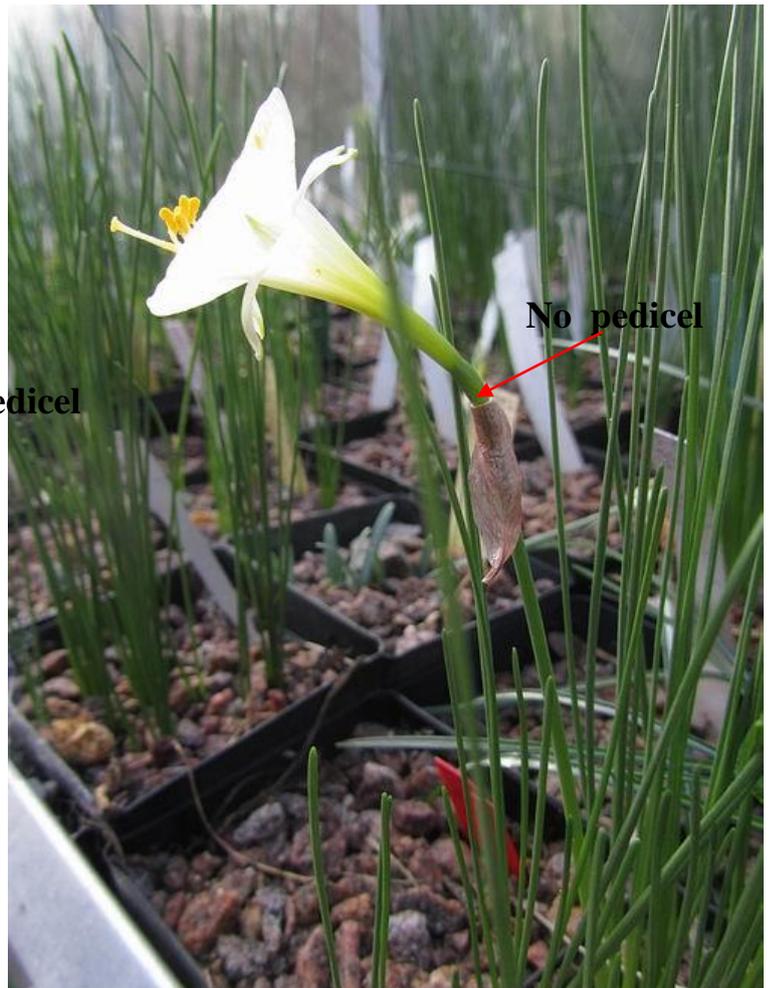


I am sure that the high UV light emitted by the three LED light systems installed above this bench will prove beneficial to growing many plants and may be just what is needed to enable us to grow high altitude alpins like those from South America and keep them compact.



Back at home in the low winter light many Narcissus are in active growth as their leaves reach up growing ever taller in search of light. How I wish there was a small affordable light system similar to the above for the home grower – may be one day that will come. If you want to read more information on these systems visit the [Heliospectra web site](#).

It is essential to ensure that there is sufficient water available to the bulbs while their leaves are growing - if they get too dry the bulbs may start to break down into many small non-flowering ones. The balance of providing enough water without risking the bulbs sitting in cold wet compost, which can result in rot, is the challenge facing growers. Growing many bulbs together in a pot is a big advantage as the mass of bulbs form a layer that drains more quickly than the compost.



Narcissus cantabricus foliosus seedling and Narcissus romieuxii seedling

One of the key diagnostics that I look for when trying to work out the parentage of the many Narcissus seedlings I have is whether they have a pedicel. The pedicel is the stem of the individual flowers and should not be mistaken for the scape which is the main stem. *Narcissus cantabricus foliosus* has a short pedicel while *Narcissus romieuxii* has none.



Narcissus cantabricus seedling - white style and filaments
Another diagnostic that I pointed out last week is the colour of the style and filaments.



Narcissus romieuxii seedling off-white style and filaments



Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus

The plant we know as *Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus* is, I think, a hybrid involving both *N. romieuxii* and *N. cantabricus foliosus* as it shares diagnostics with both of these species.



Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus



Crocus laevigatus

This is the darkest form of *Crocus laevigatus* that we grow - the background colour of the floral segments is significantly darker than most other forms we have.



Crocus laevigatus

I will round off this week with a comparison between the dark form and a paler one.....