



SRGC

----- Bulb Log Diary -----

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BULB LOG 32.....12th August 2015





I always associate the peak flowering of **Cyananthus lobatus** with the end of summer - now here it is in all its glory and we have had little of the warm sunny weather that summer should bring. It has been so cool and wet that the *Dactylorhiza* flowers seem to have gone on for much longer than in other years – the ones in the foreground



are growing in a trough and due to being drier at the root these always go over that bit earlier than those growing in the open garden beds. The profile of the *Cyananthus* flowers shows the stylish shape of the calyx which is further accentuated by a covering of dark hairs.

Cyananthus lobatus



The *Cyananthus* trails over the left hand end of this slab bed while the right hand side is dominated by *Hypericum reptans*. Other *Hypericum* species have established in the centre along with *Cyananthus microphyllus* which flowers later.



Bees also enjoy the wide open flowers of ***Hypericum reptans***.



I am aware that plants just like us, get old, lose vigour and die – while some can be very long lived, none are immortal so I am always trying to propagate our plants. As I continually state my preferred way to get plants is by seed but I am also continually taking cuttings of plants - here are a group in the small mist unit under the bulb plunge.



I have not taken cuttings from the *Cyananthus* before - normally I would raise them from seed or divide the thong like roots in the early spring. I have a number of well rooted cuttings that are branching out, because I also pinched out the lead shoot, but what I do not know yet is will these cuttings be able to over-winter. I have found in the past that cuttings from plants that make a winter storage root will root and grow that season but do not form the thong like storage roots that allow it to survive winter dormancy.



What do you think these very different plants have in common – yes they both have adaptations to survive dry periods by storing moisture in swollen leaves. It is more obvious that it is swollen leaves in the Sedum but the bulb structure is also made of modified swollen leaves. This however is not the link that made me want to get the Sedum. It was on a Sedum specialist's stand at Gardening Scotland that I saw a pot of **Sedum yosemitense**, often called Sedum spatulifolium subsp yosemitense, and I wanted to get this to go with **Allium yosemitense** that I grow.



The grower who had none of this plant for sale generously gave me a few shoots pulled off his display pot.

Now I have both these plants it is my intention to have a bit of fun and experiment by growing them both in a single pot to see what happens.



I am repotting these ***Galanthus krasnovii*** seedlings for the first time since I sowed the seed in late 2012 and they took more than a year before they germinated in March 2014 so they have had two seasons of growth.



Somebody in our house likes to grow the occasional (?) *Galanthus* and this one, ***Galanthus 'Corrin'*** (raised by Bob and Rannveig Wallis) was from the late David Quinton. After a few years of pot growth it is proving to be a good increaser and a great reminder of a lost plant friend.



Since I replaced all the staging in the bulb houses I changed the area of bench that I kept clear as a work space to additional plunge so I have had to work out another method of working in the bulb houses. A flat aluminium tray supported on two wooden batons prevents the tray flattening the labels sticking out of the pots and allows me to set up a work station in any of the three glass houses.



I will not manage to re-pot everything but I will work through as many as I can before I need to water them on the 1st September. Because the potting mix is largely sand and grit, and if everything seems

healthy, I can just refresh the mix by adding a small amount of bone meal. I just measure the quantity roughly on a plastic teaspoon but in response to a query I have measured the rate to be approximately 5gms per litre.



I am always relieved to see the remains of a good root system when I tip a pot out as this means that the bulbs should also have grown well - as you can see from these good-sized Narcissus bulbs below.





I like to share my failures as well as my successes with you – in fact we can learn more from a failure than we can from a success.

When you change any parameter in your methods it can have a knock-on effect on your entire regime.

I changed all the plunges and failed to take full account of the fact that I now had a smaller volume of sand in the plunge which results in a smaller reservoir of moisture below the pots.

I am finding many of the bulbs have not grown as well as I would like – many pots of Narcissus in particular contain many smaller bulbs a typical indication that they did not get

sufficient water and hence nutrients during the critical growing season. From the lack of root remains in these pots I can work out that I failed to get sufficient water to them during September and October when they are making roots and so the bulbs were hampered by a much reduced root system. This year I will take account of the reduced volume of sand and deliver much more regular watering.



These *Tecophilaea cyanocrocus* corms have also suffered to a lesser degree from insufficient watering.



Tecophilaea cyanocroca corms

Cleaned up they do not look too bad but I am disappointed by both the size and small number of offset corms that have formed.

When grown well I can get two good sized off sets on each mature corm. These offsets would need another good growing season before they reach flowering size.



We have to grow the strangely scented **Eucomis autumnalis subsp. amaryllidifolia** in a pot as it is not long term hardy in our garden. We have tried *Eucomis autumnalis* in the garden where it just hung on for a few years before succumbing to our cold wet conditions.



We have only this single plant of **Eucomis schijffii** so it too remains in a pot. When these plants start to die back I dry them out completely then store them on the lower level staging in the bulb house - I only water them when I see the tip of the shoot breaking the surface in the spring then ensure they are well watered through the summer. Neither has set any seed for us so this season I am cross pollinating them to see if that will result in any seed.



Mutisia oligodon hybrid



For thirty odd years we have grown a *Mutisia oligodon* hybrid on the south wall of our house.

It grew so vigorously that I had to hack it back every winter to stop it taking over the path and shading the windows. It always responded well to being cut back with masses of new shoots appearing even right back into the older wood - until this spring when I noticed as I was cutting it back that the normally pliable stems were brittle and dead.

As I moved down the bush I found that it was all dead all the way down through the trunk to the roots. There were a couple of stems that had life rising from a second much smaller plant which reminded me that I had planted a second seedling some years ago.

Sometimes it is difficult to understand why a plant such as this suddenly dies but we should realise that all plants have a life span and perhaps this plant had just lived its natural life span.

Luckily I did sow some seeds last year and have now planted out two more seedlings in the same spot so we are hopeful of another thirty years of the lovely large daisy like flowers.



They say it is best to bury all the bad news together so here is another issue in the garden. On the left you can see two flowers of the white Dactylorhiza 'Eskimo Nell' and on the right is a clump of the typical coloured ones – both these plants were lifted and divided some years ago when I would have replanted five of each. I remember a good flowering of Eskimo Nell the first year after replanting but now it is looking very weak with only two flowering stems and one with a single leaf. At one time I lifted and divided this form every year and built up a good number



both to populate the garden and pass around now, since I have not lifted any for a few years, we only have three small groups left. If I do not actively propagate 'Eskimo Nell' by lifting and spitting it every second year at least we are going to lose it altogether.

Most other forms of Dactylorhiza we grow readily form clumps to the point that they need splitting every three years or so while 'Eskimo Nell' seems to only ever put up a single new stem each year unless it is nurtured.



Not so much a problem just a seasonal task is keeping the 'weeds' out of the bulb sand beds.



The good thing is that at this time there are only a few bubs in growth so it is easy to spot and remove the weeds before they in turn seed around. I do have to watch for desirable seeds like the cluster of Crocus seeds you can see above and make sure I do not throw them away. As I weed I work the Crocus seeds underground where they will germinate and grow on.



Task half-done



Not everything that seeds into the sand beds is unwelcome like these self-sown *Meconopsis* seedlings that are growing in one of the *Erythronium* plunge beds. I will leave these to grow on and lift them next spring – I get most success moving *Meconopsis* seedlings just as they are starting back into growth.



The good thing about gardening is that there is nearly always a chance to recover from your mistakes if you react to them quickly - remember the plants are on your side as they too want to survive; many, like *Meconopsis*, providing an annual set of seed.....