



BULB LOG 23.....10<sup>th</sup> June 2015





### **Corydalis flexuosa**

Art in the garden and the garden as Art are one and the same thing to me. Gardening is just another medium to practise and express our creativity no matter whether it is a metal sculpture, drawings, paintings or the layout and planting up of the garden, all involve the creative process, bringing pleasure and frustration in equal measure.

One thing being an artist teaches you is not only to look but also to see what is before you – that is to observe carefully.



The majority of the blue in both these pictures comes from the flowers of **Corydalis flexuosa**. There were a number of clones of this species introduced which have become established in cultivation – I found that some clones did not persist in our garden perhaps they could not adapt to our conditions but the one pictured is very happy and even seeds around.



Here the foreground is dominated by **Corydalis flexuosa** with a similar taller growing plant behind – here the differences are obvious- taller growing, paler leaves, later flowering are the most obvious. It was by observation that I first discovered Corydalis ‘Craigton Blue’ seeded into the gravel area, shown below, and it was easy to work out what the parents were. Corydalis omieana (previously confused with C. elata) and Corydalis flexuosa both of which grew nearby and the features of the resulting plants were intermediate between the parents.



**Corydalis ‘Craigton Blue’**

I wrote in [Bulb Log 26 2005](#): The name x Craigton Blue refers to a group of seedlings that arose between Corydalis elata (now omieana) and C. flexuosa. Some years ago there was a massive seed set on C. elata (now omieana). I sowed some seed in pots but most did not germinate so I spread the compost on the garden. The majority of the seeds had scattered themselves in the gravel area in front of the bed and that is where I noticed plants germinating - resulting in the initial crop Corydalis x Craigton Blue. I now know that C. ‘Craigton Blue’ is fertile, setting some seeds most years with the resulting offspring showing slight variations from the original crossing.



**Corydalis capitata** has interesting features in that the deep purple flowers are bunched in a cluster or cap at the top of the stem when they open. The stem then elongates as the seed ripens so the seed capsules become spaced out.



This species seems to be very fertile setting plenty of seed most years which results in many self-sown seedlings appearing around this bed. The one on the left is typical of **Corydalis capitata**, the seed parent, but I started to observe that others were very different.

The first most obvious indicator was the colour of the flowers had changed and was more to the blue end of purple they were also a bit more spread out than in *C. capitata* and the foliage also differed. It is clear that these are hybrids with *Corydalis capitata* being the seed parent – the pollen parent could be either *Corydalis flexuosa* or more likely *C.x* 'Craigton Blue'.



We have been watching these seedling for some years now noting both how well they grow and how decorative they are resulting in us identifying this one as the best so far. I will lift some of this plant in the late summer to grow on so we can further asses it for both the rate of increase and to confirm its decorative features - for now we call it **Corydalis 'Craigton Purple'**.



Peter Korn gave me a similar plant that he named Corydalis 'Korn's Purple' – here I hold it next to ours to show that they are significantly different in colour.



I must rescue this plant of **Corydalis pseudobarbispala** before it disappears completely under the competition.

I will have to decide if I move the Corydalis or thin out some of the other plants in this bed – for now I think I will move it to one of the raised humus beds where we can better enjoy this stunningly beautiful plant.

The favoured spot to relocate this Corydalis pseudobarbispala is in the same bed as we grow some Corydalis mucronipetala see below.



***Corydalis mucronipetala***



***Corydalis mucronipetala*  
seedlings**

My favoured way of getting plants is from seed – it is often the cheapest way to get a quantity of plants, a packet of seed often costing about the same as a single plant would.

You also then have the advantage of having several clones which in turn gives us a better chance of getting them to set seed. The disadvantage is you have to wait a bit longer, buying an established plant is like buying time but I don't mind the wait – in fact a large part of my pleasure comes from watching the process from seed to maturity. This pot of seed was sown in February 2013 and now it has the first flower buds.



***Corydalis mucronipetala* seedlings**

Ideally I would sow *Corydalis* as soon as it ripens which is what I do with our own seed but when it comes from seed exchanges we often do not get the seed until the following February, some six months or more after it ripened.

The critical process for successful germination depends on the storage. Firstly the seed must be kept moist – stored in just-damp sand works well. Secondly do not place the seed immediately in a fridge - it must have four to six weeks of ambient temperatures to allow the seeds to continue to mature - a process that continues after it is shed from the plant.

To further speed the time between germination and flowering I pot the seedlings on a month or two after they have germinated. I do this not by disturbing the seedlings but by carefully moving them on en masse into a bigger pot using the method illustrated. Make sure the seedlings are well watered and allowed to drain this ensures that the compost will stay in place when tipped out of the pot allowing you to drop it into the space formed in the larger pot.





The void is easily made using a pot the same size as the seed pot which is then carefully removed -again the compost must be well moistened and gently firmed to leave the void. Why not just sow the seed in a bigger pot in the first place? I have tried this and cannot explain precisely why but that does not work as well as this repotting procedure which seems to give the seedlings a real boost.



#### **Galanthus 'Elizabeth Harrison' capsule and seeds**

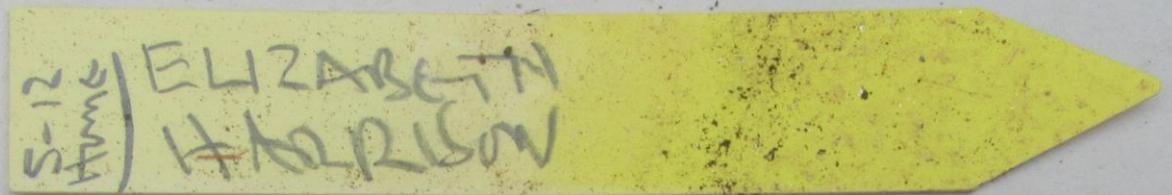
Because of the cold damp conditions at flowering time it has been a very poor year for bulbous seeds, especially in the bulb houses – we have virtually no Narcissus seed and very little seed on the spring Crocus and Fritillaria. Outside plants have fared a bit better especially the ones that flowered during the brief better spells of weather we had in April. We are pleased to have a few (3) seeds on Galanthus 'Elizabeth Harrison' again.

## Galanthus 'Elizabeth Harrison' seeds

I say 'again' because we got a few in 2012 as well.

Some cultivars and hybrids appear to be sterile and never set seed while others can set seed but often the quantity in the capsule is much less than you would get in a species.

I carefully planted the three seeds half way down in a 7cm seed pot – this will be left in a seed frame, open to the weather all year, until it germinates then I will move it under glass.



I have re-potted these seedling bulbs, sown in 2012, for the first time this year - I doubt that they are big enough to flower next year. Perhaps if I had moved them on using the same method I described above they would be flowering sized by now. It is nice to see even young bulbs that are willing to divide and increase - now I just have to wait to see if they retain that lovely yellow colouration of the seed parent.



I did some cross fertilisation between some of the better yellow snowdrops we have - these seeds are from **Galanthus 'Primrose Warburg'** fertilised with the pollen from one of Anne Wright's lovely new Dryad Gold series which, as you can read on the [Forum](#), she has now named.



**The bulb house**



As these pictures show there are no nice erect stems holding the fat seedpods that I like to see this year so I will just have to settle for the vegetative increase by the bulbs.



The weather was very variable when some of the later bulbs flowered and we even had a few nice days when the *Tecophilaea* were in flower resulting in a few fat seedpods on the flowers that were lucky enough to mature on the good days.



***Tristagma lechtlinii*** also flowers later and enjoyed some warm sunny days so it looks like a really good seed set.



Outside one of the major seasonal changes is under way as the deciduous leaf canopy develops making the garden feel both much more enclosed from above and divided into spaces, each with its own different environment.



Summer flowering bulbs such as this **Arisaema** which you can see towards the bottom left of the above picture, are bringing interest.



**Vaccinium floribundum** in full flower is a wonderful sight as spreads out cascading over our front dyke.



It is not just the flowers that are decorative on **Vaccinium floribundum** as you see here and below the new leaves have a lovely bright colour when they first emerge before taking on the characteristic harder green leaf as they mature.



**Vaccinium floribundum**

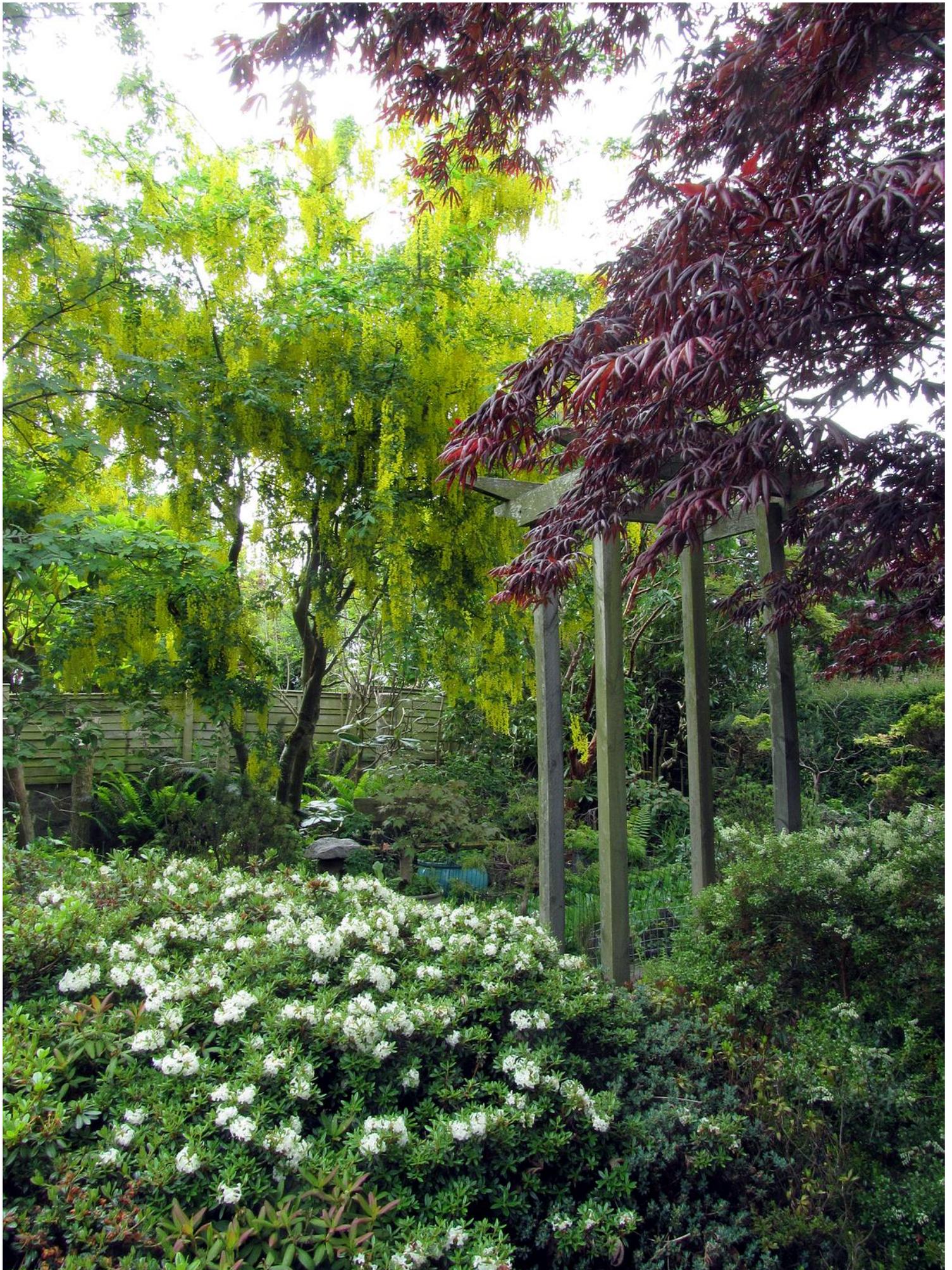
And if this is not enough to make you want to grow this plant or its relatives then the abundance of sweet edible dark berries produced in autumn should.



Perhaps not quite as decorative as the previous species **Vaccinium ovatum** is also a good garden plant and its fruits are even tastier.



New leaves on **Vaccinium ovatum**



There is so much to enjoy in the garden just now I hope we get good weather.....  
Fred has resolved the embedded player issue in the forum so check out the latest [Bulb Log video diary supplement](#)