



BULB LOG 34.....24th August 2016





Codonopsis grey-wilsonii

I cannot understand why Codonopsis and particularly Codonopsis grey-wilsonii are not more widely grown. I have always been fascinated by the way the sexual parts of the flower perform. When the flower opens the anthers clasp the closed stigma and as the flower matures the filaments and anthers reflex outwards eventually lying flat against the petals, this reveals a closed club like stigma which after a few days parts into three sections revealing the stigmatic surfaces. It is common across many flowers for the pollen to ripen before the stigmatic surface is revealed or receptive, in the hope that a pollinator will bring

pollen from another clone as that will give the best fertilisation and the widest spread of genes - if that fails the opportunity is still there for self-pollination to occur.



Codonopsis grey-wilsonii

Three differing stages can be seen in these flowers. We have grown this plant for forty years, formerly under the name Codonopsis forrestii before it was re-classified. We have to get used to name changes and, as a Forumist pointed out, I made a slip a few weeks ago, when in a senior moment, I mistakenly referred to '~~Pseudocorydalis~~' when I should have written Pseudofumaria - in the same Bulb Log I also put an extra 'g' in Lilium lankongense. I will make mistakes and I am always grateful when you point them out and make comments.



A similar colour theme to the Codonopsis is expressed in one of the slab beds where the blue **Cyananthus lobatus** sprawls and tumbles over one end - Megan is coming to see what I am doing.

It is fascinating how some flower colours dominate seasons - many late summer/autumn flowering rock garden type plants such as those mentioned, as well as Gentians, are predominantly blues while in early spring there is a tendency towards the hot colours.

Cyananthus lobatus

The growth radiates out from the central root and the flowers form a circle with a bald patch in the centre.

I do wonder if this plant might be a hybrid as it has never set any seed.





Cyananthus lobatus

It is easy to root cuttings but they do not form the fat overwinter storage roots so they just die as winter approaches so in the absence of seed the only way to propagate this plant is by dividing the root. The roots form a tight cluster much like some gentians and can be divided the same way by lifting them and carefully separating them out into individuals or clusters as preferred. I would split them in early spring at the very first signs of growth when the plant is in a much better condition to heal any damage than it is in autumn as it prepares for dormancy. Click the link to see this bed and more in the latest edition of the [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#).



Cyananthus microphyllus

A few years ago I planted out a number of seed raised plants of *Cyananthus microphyllus* in the same bed - with several clones of this species I did get some seed last year. I will be interested to see if cross pollination will occur and I get some seed on the *Cyananthus lobatus* now.



Cyananthus microphyllus



Hypericum reptans

Another plant with the same spreading mat-type growth, *Hypericum reptans*, shares the same slab bed and flowers around the same time - this one is bright yellow. It flowers over a very long period with a constant display of flowers and attractive buds that will keep going until the winter really sets in.



As you can see below it attracts unwelcome visitors as well as flying pollinators.



Two more Hypericums from the front garden; the first in fruit which illustrates how these plants spread around so freely - volunteering in many gardens as they did in ours.





Round the back there is work to be done in clearing some of the old growth from the bulb bed. In many beds I leave this growth to die back naturally over the winter but as there are Autumn flowering Colchium and Crocus in this bed and I want to be able to see the flowers unhindered by so much old foliage.



I have cut back what foliage I can without harming the plants and now I will see the flowers as they come through.



While I was clearing I found **Eucomis bicolor** had sneaked into growth hidden from our view by the mass of spring and summer growth.

As I cleared I also exposed quite a lot of weeds which I dealt with using one of my favourite garden hand tools.

I find a builders trowel is far better than the majority of had trowels or forks for removing weeds or planting - it is much stronger and as well as having the flat face I can use the edge to tweak out a stubborn weed from the roots of other plants – you should try one.





This Trillium seed pod has been chewed open and the seed will be taken away by wasps if I do not collect it now.



Meconopsis self-seeding into the *Erythronium* plunge.



Meconopsis

I am sure this is a weed that many of you would welcome into your garden - all you have to do to achieve this is to move to Scotland or somewhere with a similar climate of cool moist summers.

I will lift and replant the seedlings from the sand plunge when I get round to splitting the *Erythronium* bulbs. Because of the cool wet weather most of the *Erythroniums* are already in root so I will now have to wait until next year.

The clump of *Meconopsis* shown on the left is one of the many that seeded into the rock garden - a process I have encouraged.

I have seen it written that *Meconopsis baileyi* (formerly known as *M. betonicifolia*) is monocarpic. This may be the case in hot dry gardens but in cool gardens like ours it forms clumps with new growths appearing around the base of the flowering stem these form flowering growths for next year making it soundly perennial.

You can also lift and split these clumps if you wish.



I am continuing with repotting the bulbs where I find some, like *Crocus speciosus*, already have shoots pushing upwards: soon there will be flowers. Notice there are no roots at this time which is why you should take care not to over-water autumn flowering *Crocus* in pots – water when the leaves appear that is when the roots will be growing.



Acis tingitana bulbs are increasing nicely.



These Colchicum bulbs have produced some small offsets which I replant back with the parents.

Note that they are planted at a good depth down the pot. I place the larger bulbs upright into the medium then simply scatter the small ones around – they will grow regardless of how they are planted and by next year the bulbs will be upright.





It is good to find the remains of a strong root growth because then you can be sure you will also have a good crop of bulbs.



The bulbs are cleaned ready for replanting.



I find bulbs fascinating and it is often the ones with damage that are the most interesting. What has caused one of these twin bulbs to have a dead, hollowed-out centre? Was it a narcissus fly grub, a slug or simply rot? It is hard to know.



One healthy *Fritillaria* bulb, one small offset plus the remains of one rotted bulb which is producing new bulbils from the intact remains of the scales illustrates how bulbs want to survive, possessing a number of ways of regenerating from such problems.



Gardening is a cyclical process where we carry out the same tasks at the same time every year as the seasons repeat. However no two seasons are exactly the same, there will always be variations and it is the variation that makes it so interesting. For so many years I have grown bulbs in pots that need repotting every year and the number of pots has increased over those years to the point that now I find it increasingly difficult to keep up with the repotting. I have

decided to cut back on the number of pots and following on from the experimental sand plunge bed I started a few years ago I am going to plant more bulbs directly into the sand so I am converting another plunge. Since I stopped sending out a list some years ago there is no great need to keep all the bulbs in separate pots with their labels, I do not mind if they get a bit mixed it will be a challenge to remember their names and I can just enjoy them growing in a slightly more natural way than being in a pot.

***Narcissus viridiflorus* seedlings**

These one year old *Narcissus viridiflorus* seedlings were sown deep in a pot in January this year and have only just stopped growing. I have not had great success growing this species in pots before, I only got the occasional flower, so I have decided to try planting these seedlings directly into the sand. Already my method is adapting because it was my intention not to use any labels in the sand but I do want to keep track of these seedlings so I have planted them in a single group and have buried the label with them as a reminder should I forget (see below).

I will of course continue to grow a lot of bulbs in pots but will cut it back to a number that I can better cope with while at the same time I have an exciting new variation to my growing methods.



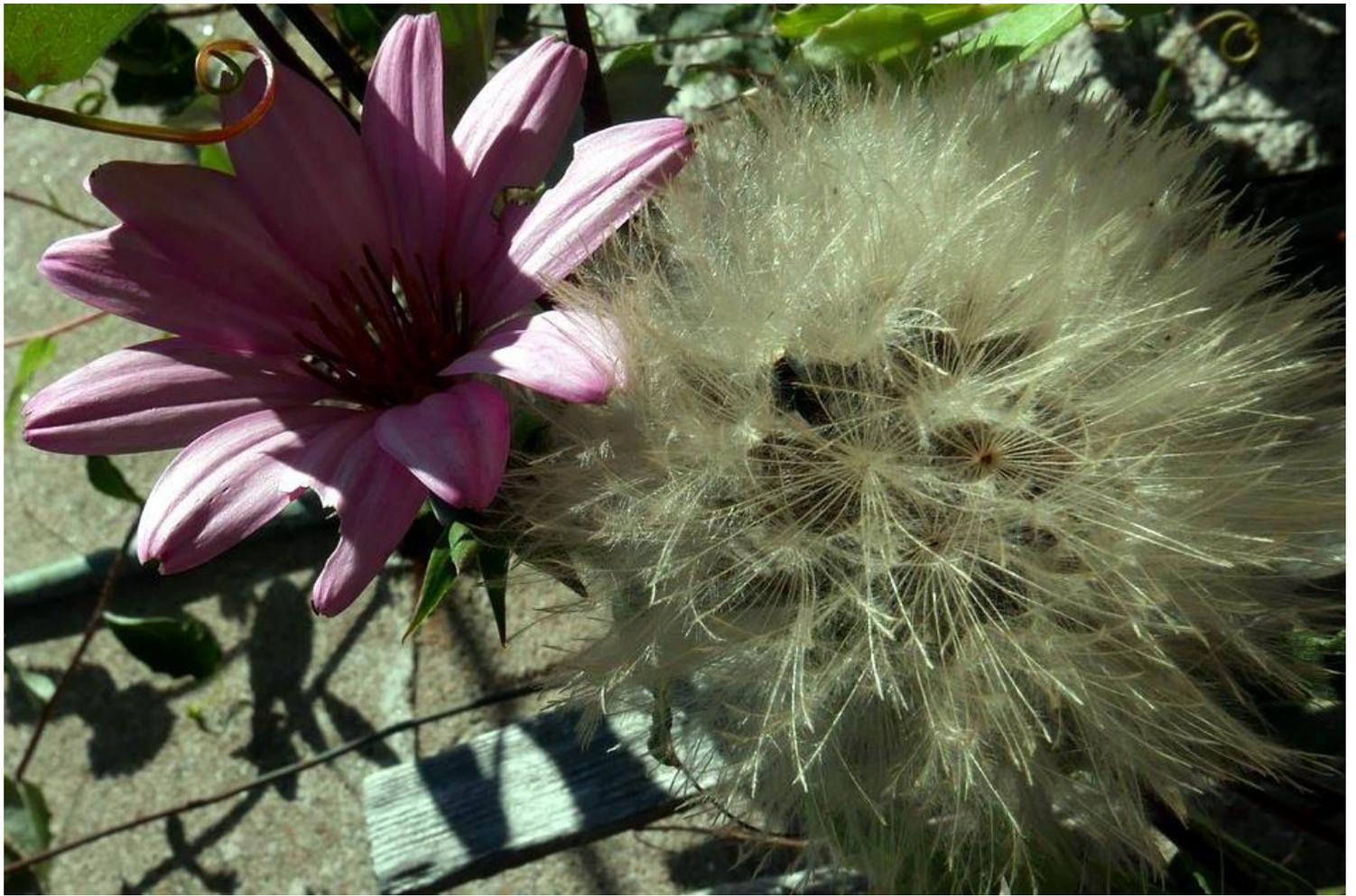
***Narcissus viridiflorus* seedlings planted in sand with the label.**



Back outside in the garden the first **Cyclamen hederifolium** flowers are appearing.



Lilium candidum flowers - only slightly chewed. This is a bumper year for snails in the garden.



Mutisia oligidon hybrid – again, only slightly chewed!

This Mutisia flower and seed head allows me to experiment more with my new camera learning how to use the different features and see how the changes affect the resulting image.





Last image for this week is a view from the front garden.....