



BULB LOG 52.....28th December 2016



A narcissus hybrid features on the cover picture of this the last Bulb Log of the year which is a good time to reflect and review what sort of seasons we have experienced over the past twelve months. Thinking of how the bulbs and other plants have grown is important, especially for those that did not grow so well, to work out why that might be – was it just down to the weather or could, or should, I intervene in some positive way?

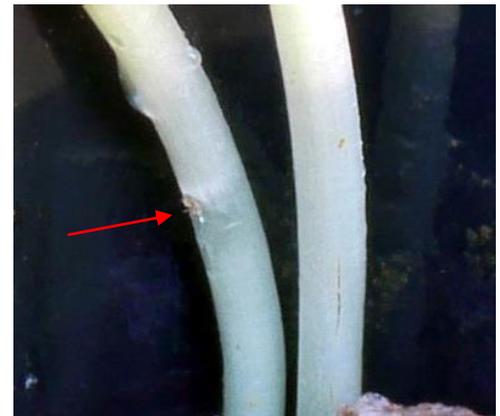
You can learn a lot from reading books, as well as reading the wealth of information now available online, however you will discover the most by learning to read your plants – they are always displaying symptoms of their condition with hints at what we as growers could be doing to help if only we learn to interpret these signs.

Keeping records with digital photography has never been easier - I take picture of everything all the time and it has become a valuable tool in the garden.



Just last week I showed this picture of two stems of **Eranthis pinnatifida** after I moved it under glass. During the week I was disappointed to discover that one of the stems had withered and was fearful that I may have caused the problem by moving them under glass and worried would the same fate befall all of the stems.

Then I checked my original full sized image where I found that the problem was there before I moved the pot. On the right you can see that some damage had been caused to the stem, possibly a nibble from a slug, before the stem grew and there are already the signs of mould forming around the small wound. If I had noticed this at



the time I could have treated the wound with sulphur which may have limited the damage, I will never know. I have to be philosophical and accept that the failures and disappointments that will happen are part of what makes gardening so interesting and rewarding when you do succeed.

The days, months and seasons repeat themselves every year but they are never identical there are always changes in conditions especially our weather which is extremely changeable. I have come to the belief that in Aberdeen we do not have our own weather we get other people's weather and whose weather we get depends on which way the wind is blowing. On 25th December, it was unseasonably mild with temperatures rising to 15C and blue skies, then next morning (26th) I woke up to snow and icy winds which were a shock to me and the dogs on our walk, never mind the plants. These fluctuating conditions will confuse the plants many of which come from environments with more clearly defined seasonal conditions and helping the plants adjust is one of the challenges that faces gardeners as we tend our plants.



When the herbaceous and bulbous plants have retreated underground it is a good time to look at the stripped back bones of the garden and see what changes I need to make. We grow so many trees and shrubs that we have to do a lot of managing of the canopy – by keeping the structure open we maximise the planting opportunities for plants such as **Erythronium revolutum**, which bring colour in the spring.

In January we will take down two trees and thin the canopy of several others – the aim is to keep the trees looking as natural as possible while allowing maximum light through to the beds below.

I have a need to continually make changes to keep my interest fresh - I cannot imagine sticking to precisely the same regimes every single year and this year one of the big changes was my decision to convert more of the bulb house plunges over to sand beds where the bulbs are planted direct. In a sense it is more like gardening on a small scale under glass as opposed to growing all the bulbs in pots. During next year I can look forward to seeing how the bulbs growing in the sand will perform in the long term, so far plants like, **Tropaeolum azureum**, are growing extremely well, in many cases better than they grew in pots.



I will still grow a lot of bulbs in pots and intend to keep this bulb house, above, and at least the plunge of 7cm pots as they are. Click here for a [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#)- showing the bulb houses at the winter solstice. I am always looking for changes I can make to the Bulb Log and while going through my picture files reviewing the colours and the growth through the year I decided on a new variation where I have all the cover images of the 52 Bulb Logs of 2016 - clicking on an image will take you to that Bulb Log.

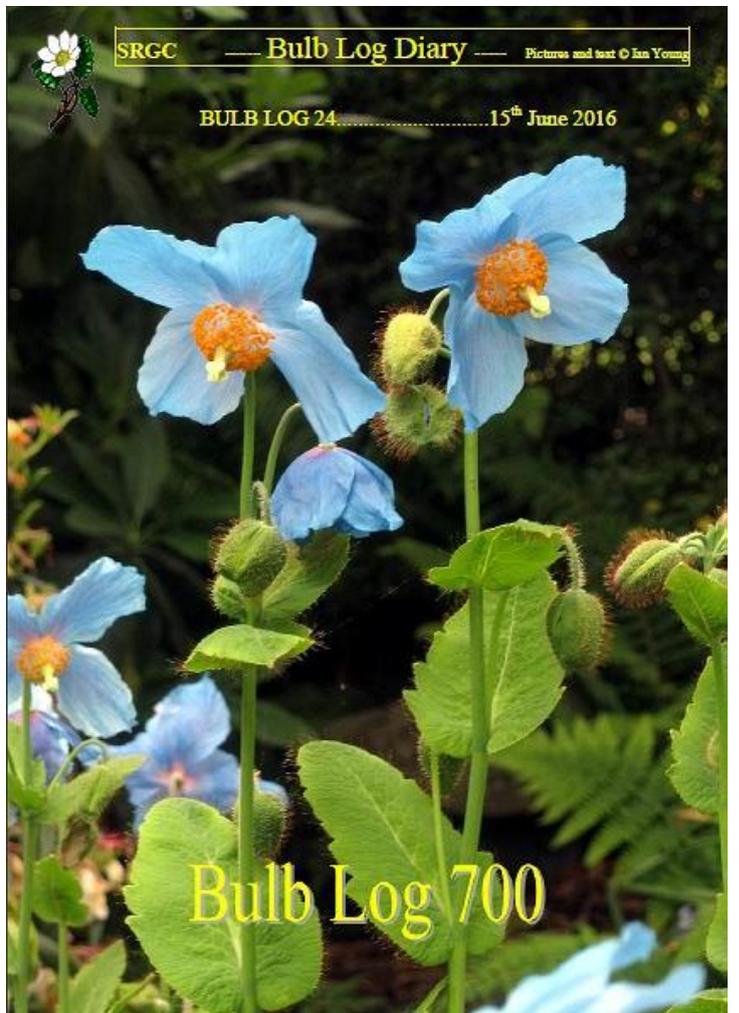










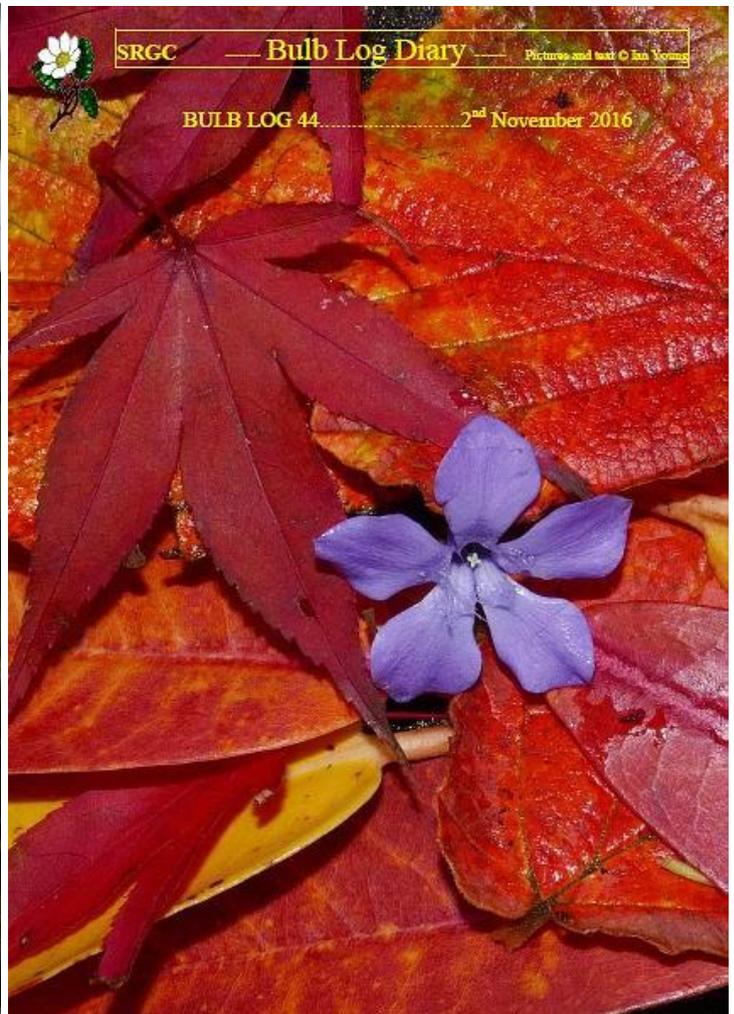


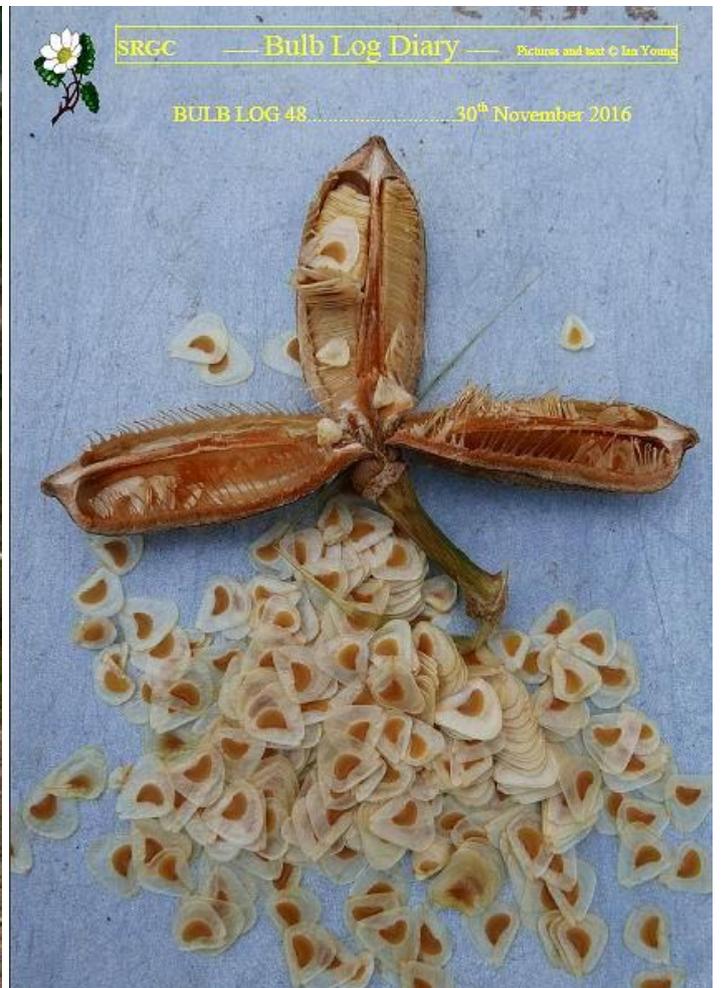














I hope you have enjoyed this year of the Bulb log and will join me again in 2017 for the 15th Year