



BULB LOG 03.....20th January 2016





At last our weather has turned cold with some blue skies and sunshine – we had -6C this week. This picture, showing the trees and city lit by the late sun, just before it dropped below the horizon, was taken at 15.35 (the church clock is wrong), looking East down from our house over Aberdeen to the North Sea. The picture shows how we are close enough to the sea for it to moderate our temperature keeping things cool in summer and preventing the extreme cold temperatures that are reached inland from Aberdeen. This moderate climate allows us to grow a relatively wide range of plants.



Now the rain has stopped I have been able to get some work done in the garden starting with some tree pruning and shredding. The hard frost has made it difficult for me to tidy the beds as the leaves and stems are frozen solid to the ground and trying to lift them damages any growth emerging below this blanket. As soon as it defrosts I will lift the leaves and replace them with the shredded hedge clippings and prunings that have been composting since summer.

I do leave the fallen leaves in some of the beds depending on two factors, first what type of leaves they are: small leaves from the Sorbus and birch allow most plants to easily push through while

the larger leaves such as from Acer 'Crimson King' form a thick blanket that small plants and seedlings find it difficult to grow through. The second factor is what is growing in the bed – I tend to remove the leaves where the smaller early bulbs are growing and leave them where it is shrubs and larger plants.



The presence of these **Eranthis hyemalis** seedlings shows the sort of damage I could do – if I lifted the leaves

when this area was frozen I could also pull out the seedlings which may be frozen on to the leaves.



Even at this early date some of the **Eranthis hyemalis** are showing colour.

This is not uniquely early in fact they were at exactly this stage last year.

I have a rule that I never look at what I have written for the equivalent week in previous years before I write my weekly Bulb Log as possible repetition may put me off. However this week I broke that rule having reading so many reports from around the country of how early things are this year. I was curious to see if that was the case here. Fancy that! I could almost repeat Bulb Log 03 from last year as the *Eranthis* and many other plants are at exactly the same stage of growth. In the frame some *Eranthis hyemalis* seed that has spilled into an adjacent pot with *Crocus* is germinating.



Eranthis pinnatifida

Just like last year the new growth of *Eranthis pinnatifida* is pushing through the gravel in this pot despite the fact that it is frozen solid in the outside frame. I will move it into the bulb house where I can better enjoy its flowers, protect it from slugs and hand-pollinate the flowers to encourage a good seed set.

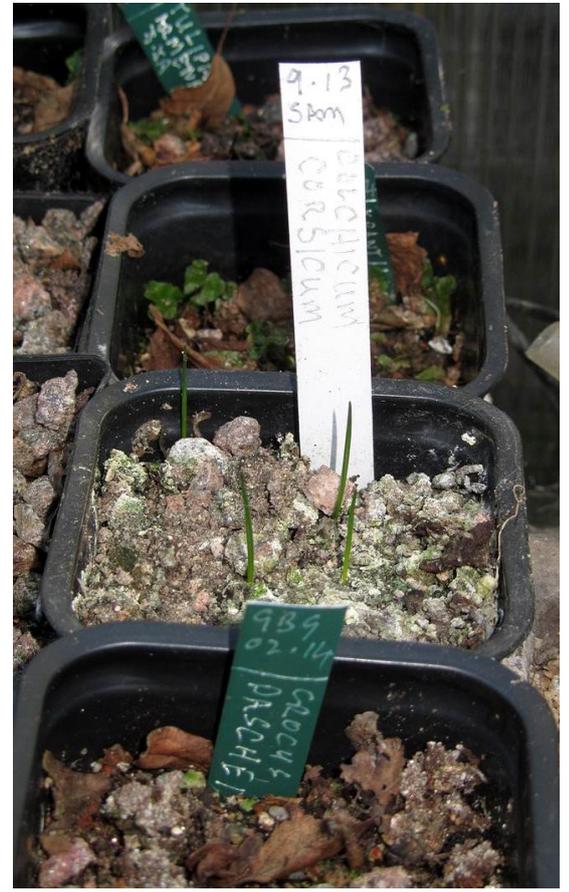


On the left is a pot of **Colchicum corsicum** seedlings and on the right is exactly the same pot that I showed this time last year.

A few more seedlings have emerged this year showing how germination of Colchicum seed can be sporadic.

In fact germination of Colchicum seed has long been a mystery to me.

I have sown many pots of fresh and stored seeds and I have never worked out when if ever they will germinate – but that will not deter me from trying.



Narcissus romieuxii with a lobed corona.

Despite the freezing conditions the hoop petticoat Narcissus continue to provide winter flowers in the bulb-houses.



Narcissus

Shown above is a photo montage giving a quick survey of some of the many forms and hybrids involving *Narcissus romieuxii* and *Narcissus cantabricus* that are flowering in the bulb-house this week.



Narcissus hybrid

I will finish this short survey with a lovely hybrid seedling involving *Narcissus romieuxii* and *Narcissus cantabricus*.

Two more chapters illustrating the *Erythronium* species from *Erythroniums in Cultivation* follow below.....

ERYTHRONIUMS IN CULTIVATION

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Erythronium helenae





**Erythronium helenae
flowers**



Erythronium helenae shares a similar colouring with many of the Western North American Erythroniums, having white flowers with a yellow centre. It can be difficult for the gardener to distinguish which is which.

The yellow centre in Erythronium helenae tends to be deeper in colour and unlike other species the yellow does not fade away slowly as it spreads out but stops a bit like a fried egg. Another guide is this species has yellow pollen but perhaps the best indicator is that the style does not project straight forward but bends sharply downwards.

Seed



Erythronium helenae seed

Seed is the main way we increase this species as it has not increased by splitting of the bulb at any speed – we have raised a hybrid from this species, Erythronium 'Craigton Cream' which does increase very well by division.



Leaves

The mature leaves are similar to many others with a pattern of dark brown on green - the dark colour sometimes fades out to silver as the season progresses. The flower stem may be green or red as illustrated in the two clones shown below.

While we do have some of this species planted in the open garden most of our plants are growing in pots or plunge baskets.

I have detected a lovely scent on some of the forms we have of this species.



Erythronium helenae

ERYTHRONIUMS IN CULTIVATION

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Erythronium multiscapideum





Erythronium multiscapideum is another species whose flowers are white with a yellow centre - some forms have additional darker zig-zag markings around the yellow zone. The pollen is milky white, the filaments are linear and the style is divided into three at the tip.



Flowers

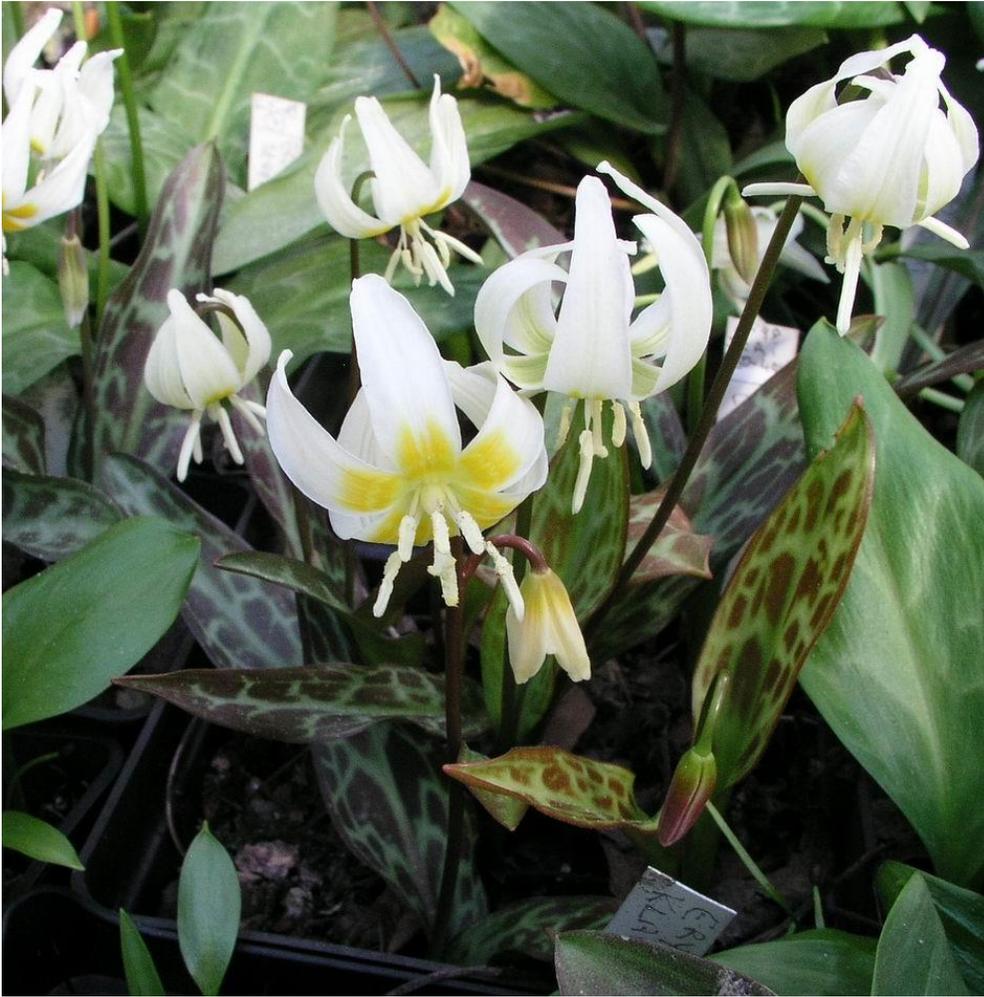


Superficially this species looks very similar to and could easily be mistaken for *Erythronium californicum*. The clear difference is in the flower stems and this is where *Erythronium multiscapideum* gets its name. In botanical terms the main flower stem is called a scape and the stems that split off that to hold the individual flowers are pedicels. *Erythronium multiscapideum* has a truncated scape which does not extend much above the ground and is mostly hidden low down in the leaves, the individual flower stems, pedicels, on the other hand are long giving the impression that each bulb has many stems rising from it, hence the specific name.

This is one of the first species to break through the ground in the spring reaching peak flowering in mid to late April.

***Erythronium multiscapideum* seed**





Leaves

Erythronium multiscapideum leaves tend to be slightly narrower than those of *Erythronium californicum*. The pattern between the dark brown and green is also slightly different which with experience can help in separating out these two species.

Erythronium multiscapideum is not difficult in cultivation and we do get seed provided the weather at flowering time is reasonably warm and dry.

I have never seen any evidence to support the often mentioned stolons that are said to grow out from the bulb.

The bulbs are slow to increase in our garden leaving seed as the main way of increase.

Erythronium multiscapideum

Even though we have grown *Erythronium multiscapideum* for the same length of time as other species, such as *Erythronium californicum*, it has never increased as much as they have.

