



BULB LOG 21.....25th May 2016



Ramonda nathaliae



We got our first *Ramonda nathaliae* plant from Jack Drake's Inshriach Nursery around 40 years ago and since then we have propagated it by division, leaf cuttings and seed so we now have many plants around the garden. Several years ago I landscaped this trough with some thick broken paving slabs then planted small plants of *Ramonda myconi*, on the left side, *Haberlea rhodopensis*, bottom right, and *Ramonda nathaliae* into the narrow crevices along the ridge. At first the trough looked rather ugly, packed with broken slabs, but now

the plants are establishing my vision is finally appearing. It takes a number of years for gardeners to realise that patience is one of the best skills to possess – this trough was well worth the wait and it can only get better as the plants continue to thrive. Troughs are like islands - small gardens working both in isolation as well as combining with other features forming the look and character of the overall garden.



As most of these *Ramonda nathaliae* are seed raised there is variation, some if you look carefully some have five petals – it is possible that there may be some hybridisation as we grow or have grown most of the *Ramonda* species as well as the closely related *Jancaea heldreichii* and *x Jancaemonda*.



Ramonda nathaliae

We used to grow this dwarf elm, **Ulmus** × **hollandica** 'Jacqueline Hillier', in the front garden where, after several years, it started to outgrow the space so we lifted it, cut it back, and planted it into a large, 60cms across, glazed pot where it has been semi bonsai'd. A number of our 'dwarf' shrubs and conifers have been given a second life in the same way when they started to outgrow their space. The elm has survived years fending for itself but the top growth had become weak and straggly, largely due to the shade cast on the pond area by the five large Cotoneaster trees



that we cut down last year. Now it is getting better light I am again working to restructure the top growth by cutting back the long straggly twigs this encourages the new growth buds which are freely produced all the way down the old wood.

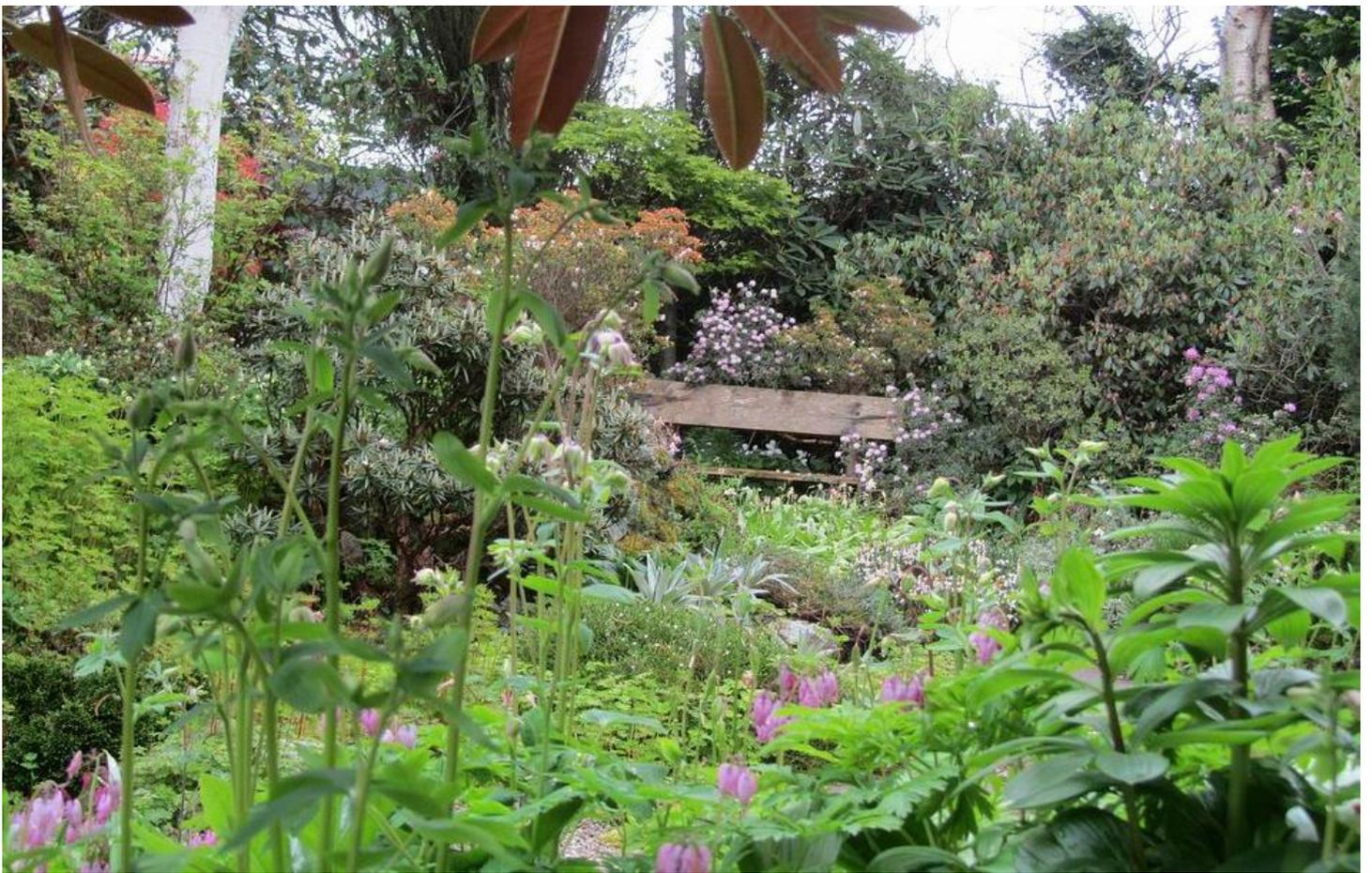
We have allowed *Violas* to self-seed all around the base of this large pot giving the impression of a small woodland garden.





The image of these **Violas** and **Oxalis magellanica**, self-seeded into these granite steps, shares a similarity in composition to the next picture of **Trillium grandiflorum** seen through one of the garden benches.





Focal points are important in a garden - these can be trees, shrubs, sculpture or this bench which you glimpse from various spots as you walk around the garden before finally arriving at the destination - see below.



The area behind this bench has become dominated by the Rhododendrons which are shading out the bed below and these are next in line for some selective cutting back to free up some more ground level planting space.



Near the bench is this group of **Erythronium oregonum** – this clone is always the latest of the genus to flower.



Cassiope wardi x fastigiata spreads in the gravel area on the path towards the bench.

Erythronium seedling

Weeding the gravel areas is always done by hand and the first rule is that you have to identify the 'weed' before you pull it out – the second rule is to decide what to leave, what to lift and replant elsewhere and what to weed out. This Erythronium seedling was replanted in a more suitable spot.



Last week I mentioned that I would try and lift and move some **Dicentra cucularia** and I have done so. It is interesting to note how the old bulb withers away passing any reserves it may have in store on to new bulbs. If I had left these to die back fully the old bulb would have shrunk away almost completely. I have removed all the larger bulbs from the bed but as they are covered in tiny rice gran like scales, which detach very easily, small plants will still grow in the original spot.



Part of 'weeding' the gravel involves leaving germinating plants until they are big enough to move successfully. This clump of seeded Corydalis is now quite big enough, in fact it is like a little island in a sea of gravel, on close investigation I find that a number of Dactylorhiza seedlings are also included in this community planting – along with Viola and 'Bowles' Golden Grass'..... I have replanted it into an appropriate bed, complete as it was lifted.



Corydalis and Dactylorhiza seedlings



On the subject of islands in the garden here is my favourite island – a habitat formed naturally when moss grew over the decorative rock I had raised on a tower of bricks so it just broke above the surface of the water. When the moss had established I realised this was the perfect habitat for **Pinguicola grandiflora** so I scattered some tiny plants which are now in their second year of flowering and looking very attractive and natural.



Look carefully and you will see that *Dactylorhiza* are also seeding into the moss – it will be interesting to see how well they will grow.



**Pinguicula
grandiflora**

So many plants have seeded onto this moss covered rock that I have had to select what can stay – so far I have removed many tree and shrub seedlings and the coarser grasses.



This bulb bed has been through at least three stages already this year starting with Eranthis and Galanthus, then the Corydalis followed by Erythronium and now it is **Uvularia grandiflora** and after that Dactylorhiza and Arisaema will flower.



Glaucidium palmatum album and Trillium flowers will soon pass but the interesting shapes and colour of foliage, especially the decorative spotted foliage, of *Podophyllum delavayi* will remain through summer into autumn.



Podophyllum hexandrum



Podophyllum delavayii



**Podophyllum
delavayii**

The flowers of Podophyllum are not the most obvious because they mostly hide away under the leaves but they are worth growing even just for the leaves, some, like Podophyllum hexandrum, also have large decorative fruits later in the year.



Podophyllum 'Spotty Dotty'



Glaucidium palmatum is another plant that grows well in our climate - we have a number of plants mostly in the typical shades of lavender – this is the pure white form which comes true from seed.



As I keep no formal records of what we plant or where we plant it I often spot unfamiliar plants flowering that require a closer look. When you look carefully you will notice these are the flowers of *Rhododendron fortunei* fallen from the shrub above onto the Hellebore and Trillium foliage.



Rhododendron fortunei



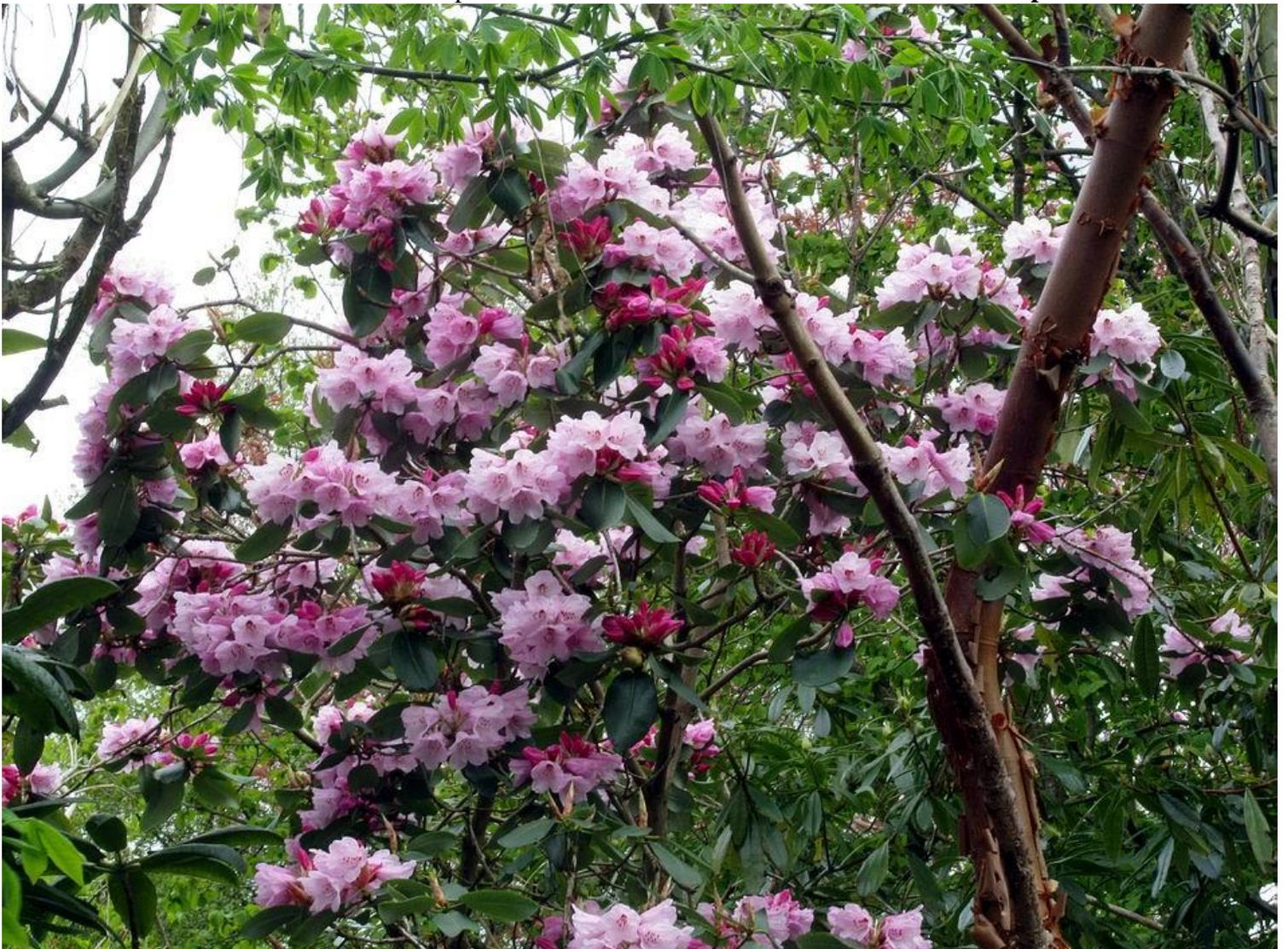
Our *Rhododendron fortunei* is more of a small tree than a shrub now as, over the years, we have removed the lower branches to keep an open planting area right up to the base – now we have to look upwards to enjoy the flowers but the beautiful scent still drifts down for us to enjoy.



The flowers are quite pink in the bud turning pure white by the time they are mature.



Some others that we have to look upwards for the flowers are **Rhododendron rex subsp. fictolacteum**.



Rhododendron selense subsp. jucundum



We also have to look up to see the flowers of **Rhododendron bureavii** but in the pictures above and below I am looking down from our upstairs window over our front garden.



Seen from above the canopy of trees and shrubs forms a colourful tapestry of different textures which obscures the view of the ground planting.



Down below there is another tapestry of plants enhanced and united by a ground cover of **Galium oderatum**.



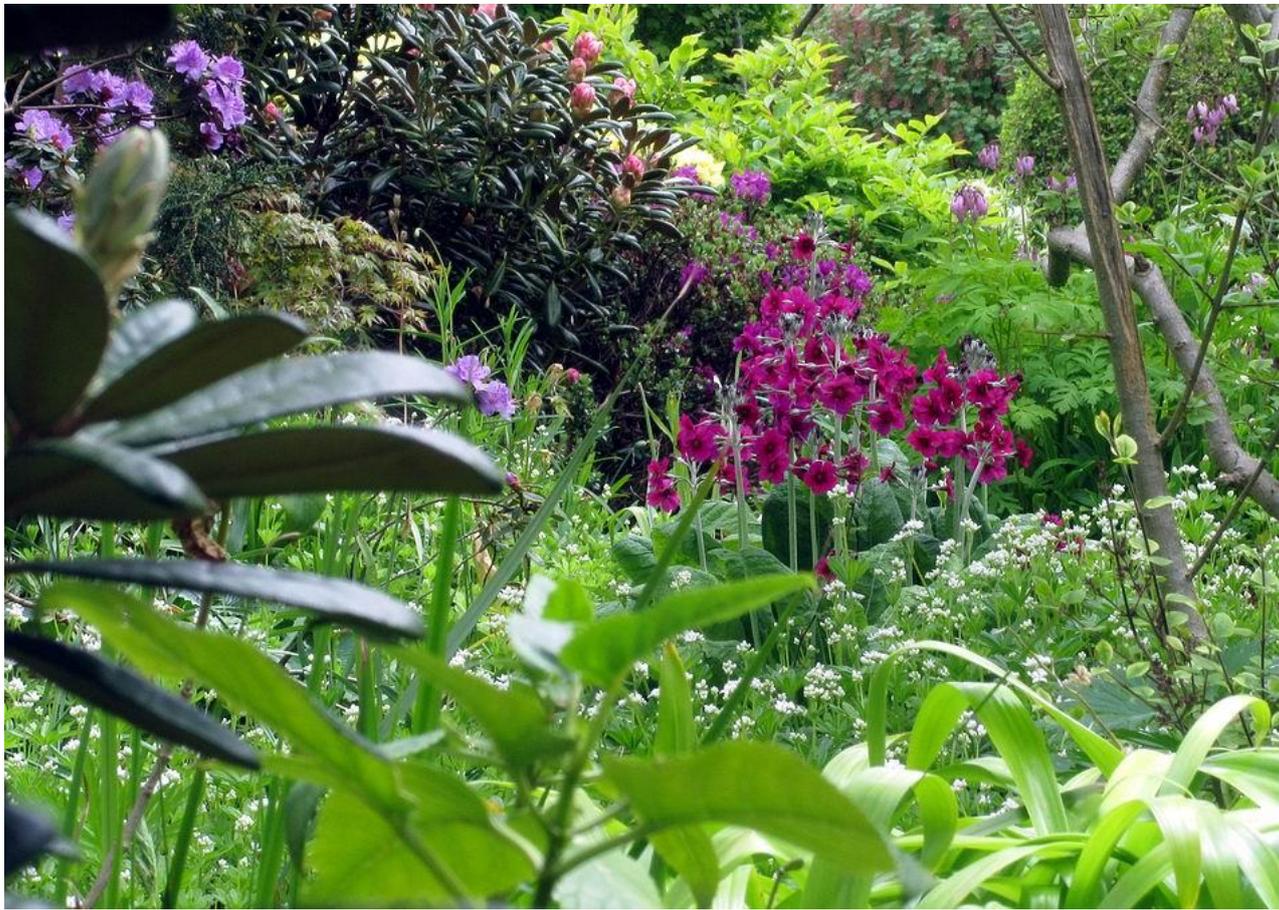
Rhododendron tomentosum formerly known as **Ledum palustre**.



Yellow **Rhododendron 'Curlew'** with the pink buds of **Rhododendron yakushimanum** just opening beyond.



Naturalistic planting in the front garden.



Primula pulverulenta stands out as one of many spot plants rising through the sea of green and white formed by the Galium oleratum.



Primula pulverulenta

I will leave you with one more image from our front garden.....