



BULB LOG 07.....15th February 2017





I am not the only one to poke about in the ground looking for the first signs of the new shoots- these pale shoots are **Trillium rivale** exposed by the blackbirds digging. Now that they are exposed to the light they will soon green up as chlorophyll forms. Note the red on the stem of the right hand one this indicates anthocyanins and I presume that this flower will have the attractive purple red markings.

This time of year is all about shoots. Here is a small clump of **Narcissus cyclamineus** shoots in the same bed - their growth is more advanced than anywhere else in the garden or frames.

This is such an exciting time in the garden and I

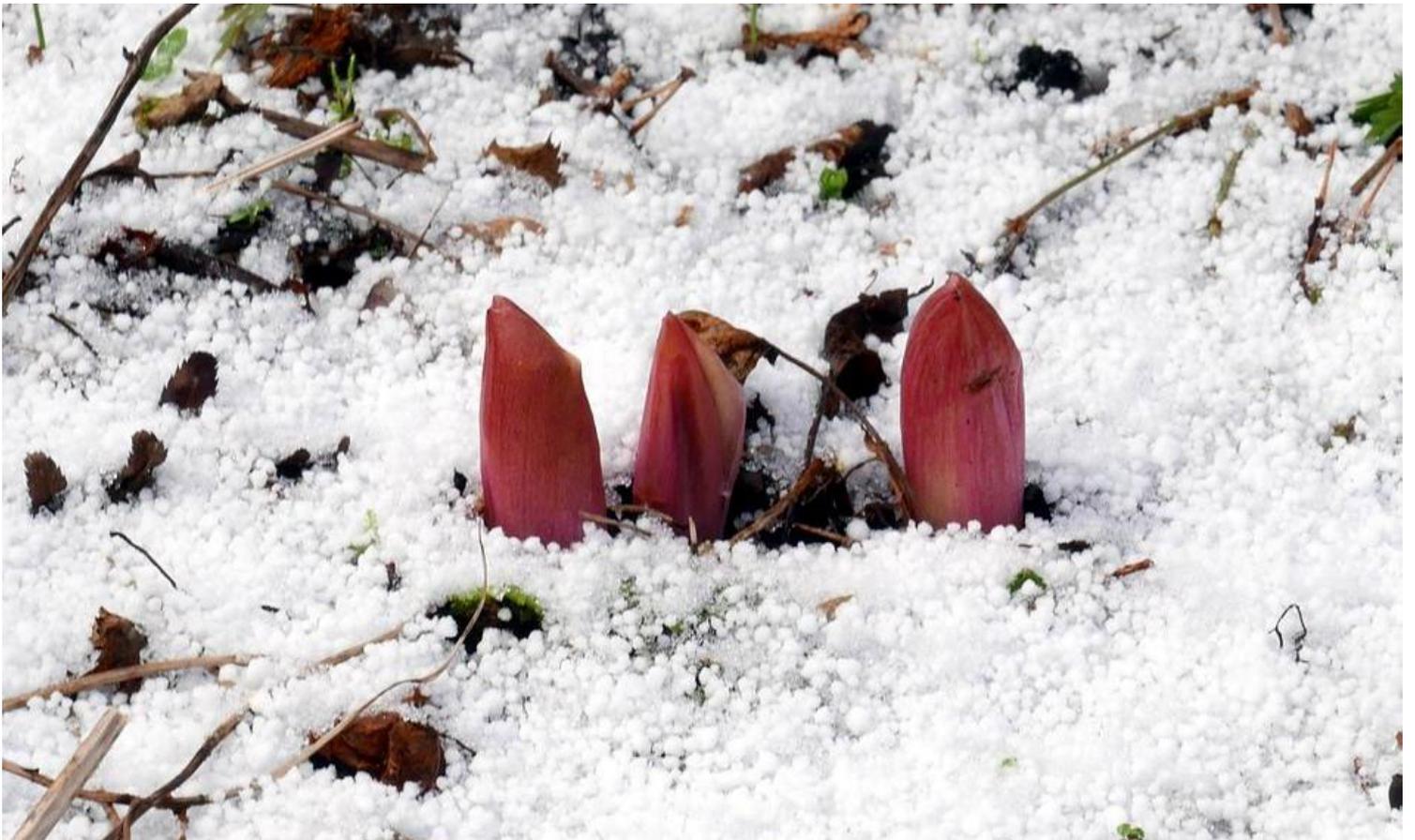
can spend hours down looking for signs of the new growth – I discover something new on every walk.



A few years ago I turned some of the seed frames into one sand bed where I have been sowing various bulb seeds directly into the sand - this week I found these **Erythronium** seeds, which I had simply scattered on the sand, germinating. All the seeds I have sown here have been growing well but typically in our garden so are the mosses and liverworts -the best way to help control this is to add a mulch to the sand.



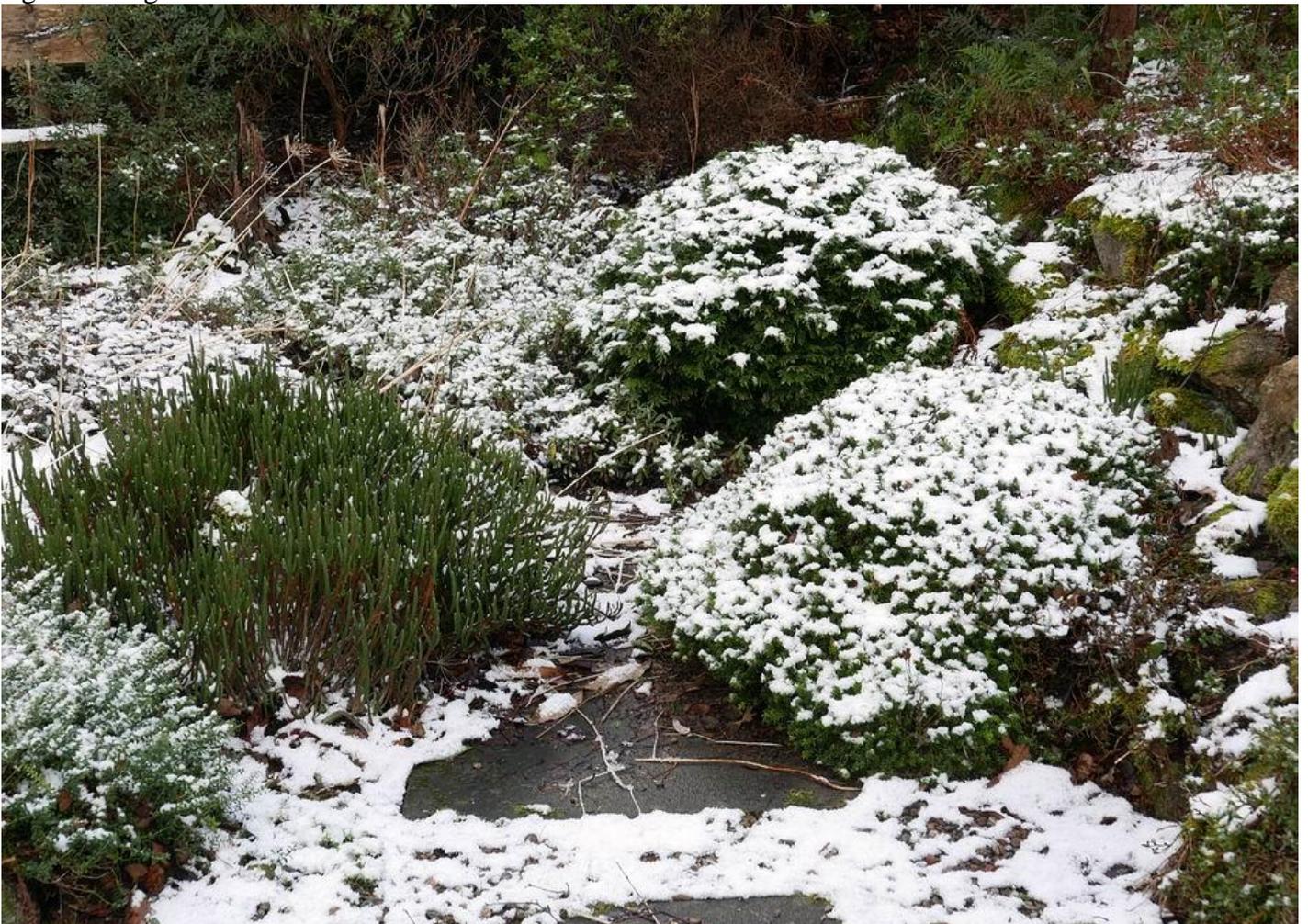
Erythronium caucasicum is always the first of this genus to appear in growth and every year it gets chewed by pesky slugs and or snails.



Fat Peony buds stand out against the light covering of snow.



Evergreen plants of various shapes and sizes provide the structure and they will soon be joined by the mass of spring flowering bulbs.



Cassiope fastigiata x wardii and *Phyllodoce caerulea* grow across the slab path with *Chamaecyparis* 'Green Globe' living up to its name in the background. Truly dwarf conifers are not that common but 'Green Globe' is one - our plant is now over 40 years old and while I occasionally trim excess growth and the occasional aberrant shoot this is how it grows.



Another two dwarf conifers of the same vintage have been growing in this trough for thirty plus years. We bought



them in the mid 1980's, as small plants from Potterton and Martin, now just [Pottertons](#) and still an excellent source of rock garden plants.

I think they were *Chamaecyparis Minima* and *Minor*, and for the first ten years we grew them in pots to take to SRGC Shows. When we stopped showing we planted them in this trough. I have been watching them growing over the edge hiding the trough, particularly the right hand one, for a few years now and now I took the decision to cut them back.



Cobble bed - with Galanthus 'Trym'

This small area at the edge of the slabs was the second sand bed I made, converted from a bird feeding area, however the mice found it far too convenient a food source, eating most of the Crocus corms.

To deter them I decided to make it difficult for them to dig by covering the surface with cobbles. The early signs are that it is working but I wait to see how effective this will be in the longer term.





Just beyond the Cobble Bed is a self-seeding planting of **Eranthis hyemalis** – some of which have seeded into the sand at the edge of the cobble bed.



Eranthis hyemalis

All these *Eranthis hyemalis* have seeded out from the original small planting with many of the seedlings reaching flowering size in their third season, then it is not long before the individual seedlings form clumps of flowers.



Eranthis hyemalis



The beautiful strong yellow of **Crocus herbertii** stands out against the snow.



I have got the front drive nearly tidied ready for the first of the spring bulbs to make their appearance and I don't have long to wait.



The first of the bulbs coming into flower in the drive is **Crocus tommasinianus**.



Another very reliable early flowering bulb in our garden is **Crocus sieberi atticus** - it forms clumps that need divided every three to five years to maintain a reliable flowering.



Iris 'Katharine Hodgkin'



Iris 'Sheila Ann Germaney' is a sister seedling to 'Katharine Hodgkin'.

This clump is now so congested that the flowers will not be able to open in their own space so I need to split it up.



Galanthus and **Corydalis flexuosa** make perfect companions with the snowdrops flowering well ahead of the Corydalis.



The same scene before the snow came.



Snowdrops and Iris in a frame.



Many forms of *Galanthus* are now coming into flower, including 'Wendy's Gold'.



A self-seeding colony of *Cyclamen coum* is establishing nicely in the sand bed.



Cyclamen coum



Despite the cold this yellow flowered hellebore is growing steadily with the first flowers now open.



Helleborus – originally from [Macplants](#).



Galanthus woronowii almost disappears in this temporarily wintry scene.



Now - there is no time like the present – there are two times when you should split plants one is the ideal time for the plant the other is the ideal time for the gardener - that is when you remember and have time. The ideal time to lift and divide many bulbs is when they are dormant but if you have a light soil and you are careful you can do it any time. I carefully lifted the clump of Iris ‘Sheila Ann Germany’ with minimal damage to the roots, above left, then washed off most off most of the soil by dunking it in a bucket of water as shown above right.



Then by carefully tugging and shaking I could tease the clump apart.

At the base of each of the bulbs there is a cluster of small bulbils and in normal circumstances very few of these will get the opportunity to grow into a full sized bulb.



Bulbils at the base of each bulb.



As I split the bulbs apart I also removed all of the bulbils that came away easily. I will plant these away from the parent bulb to give them a better chance of maturing to flowering sized bulbs.



I now have ten bulbs many with two flowering shoots to replant spaced apart so that the flowers can open fully without overlapping each other.



Iris 'Sheila Ann Germaney' lifted, split, replanted and watered in well. Even in winter or when the ground is wet it is very important to water any plants that you split like this in well so that the soil gets washed in to make good contact with all the roots.



Galanthus 'Lapwing'

The snow is coming and going but it does not deter the early flowering bulbs, I am just waiting for a day when it is bright and mild enough to encourage the Eranthis flowers to open