



BULB LOG 10.....8<sup>th</sup> March 2017





Just to remind us how variable our weather is, last Friday was beautiful the sun was splitting the sky and we could feel spring, then as night fell, the rain moved in and we had 20 plus hours of heavy rain and wind. Having lived in Aberdeen all my life I have learned to adapt to these weather fluctuations and so have the Leucojum where each flower forms a perfect

umbrella to protect the reproductive parts of the flower from the weather.



**Leucojum var carpathicum 'Podpolozje'** has yellow tips to the petals although the exact shade of yellow will vary depending on the conditions. Light values seems to be one of these variables as flowers shaded in the centre of the group can have greener tips and some flowers can have green tips on one side and yellow on the other.



Unlike some of the other early bulbs, like *Galanthus*, *Eranthis* and *Crocus*, *Leucojum* flowers do not open and close as the conditions change, they are perfectly adapted to shed any water.





This group of **Leucojum var carpathicum** have yellow ovaries and the tips can vary from greenish yellow to yellow.



It is good to see an increasing interest in growing and exploring the decorative values of *Leucojum* in the garden although they have a long way to go to catch up with *Galanthus*. This group seeded into a spreading matt of *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens' making a striking contrast.



Leucojums are not too fussy about where they grow and I often plant bulbs in less than ideal growing conditions. This group are growing under a tree right at the base of the hedge where they get pretty dry and heavily shaded later in the year however by that time they will have shed their seed and retreated underground.



In the foreground are some Leucojum seedlings growing in the path by the hedge. To read more about Leucojum check out an indepth article in the [International Rock Gardener](#).



*Galanthus* flowers are encouraged to open in the spring sunshine.



I have used polystyrene boxes to grow and bulk up bulbous plants for many years and to make the boxes fit better in the garden I have sculpted and painted them to look like stone. This box has been in service for over 20 years and needs a bit of a re-paint along the top edge – hopefully I will do that in the summer when I replant it. You may think this is a box of *Galanthus nivalis* but it is actually a box of *Sanguinaria canadensis*. Somehow a single snowdrop got into the

box and over the years it has increased – when re-planting the *Sanguinaria* I also returned the snowdrop and now it has increased to the extent that it now fills the trough – the *Sanguinaria* flowers will appear later.



Down at the side of one of the slab beds is a group of smaller polystyrene boxes, two with *Corydalis* 'Craigton Purple' two with different clones of *Corydalis* *solida*, ('Beth Evans' and 'George Baker') and two with *Eranthis* 'Guinea Gold'.

Growing them in boxes allows me to replant them into fresh compost every year giving the maximum rate of growth and increase.



***Eranthis* 'Guinea Gold'**

There is a tendency to just take in the mass display of flowers when we should teach ourselves to get close and study the flowers in detail to appreciate their intricate beauty.



Above and below are the same box of **Eranthis 'Guinea Gold'** showing how the flowers open and close according to the conditions, the picture above was taken the day before the lower one.





Other plants are also starting to flower around the garden such as **Rhododendron 'Cilpinense'**





***Primula marginata* 'Napoleon' hanging down the side of a trough.**



**Saxifrages are also starting to open some flowers in the troughs.**



I like natural style plantings and love the way this saxifrage growth follows the crack in the rocks just as you might see them doing in nature.

My gardening philosophy is having initially introduced the plants to the garden to then allow them to take charge by self-seeding with minimal intervention.

I love the way that these *Erythronium* seedlings, like the previous saxifrage, follow the rock. I suspect the seed was shed falling onto the rock then rolling to the ground so the new growth is clustered around the edge.



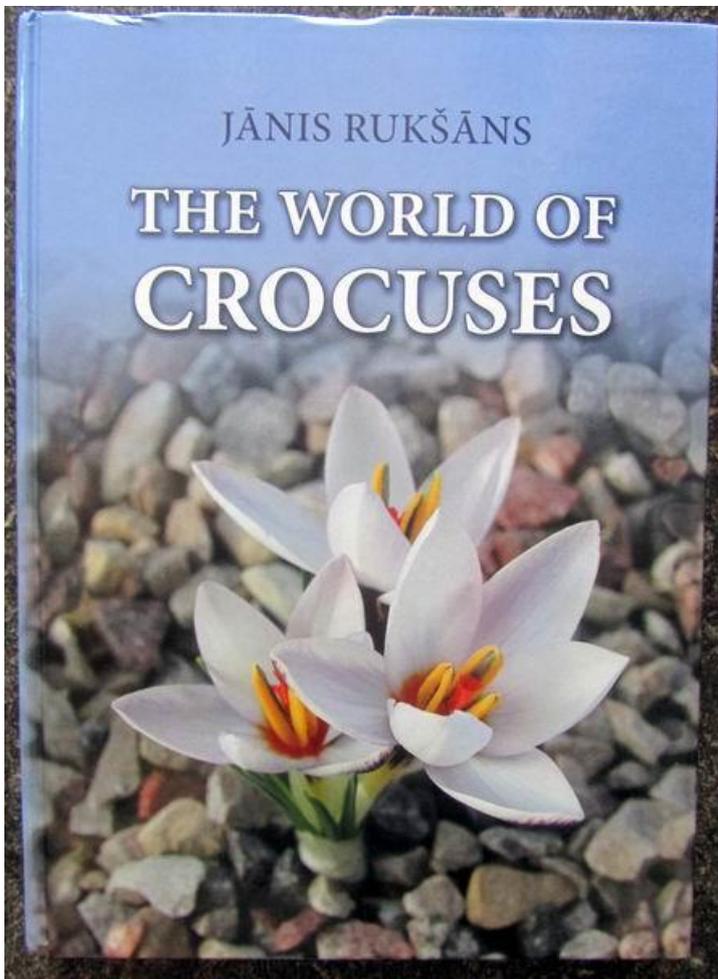


You should be able to tell from this picture that it was taken on the day of beautiful sunshine – it is a group of Crocus growing in the small cobble bed. I am heartened by the growth of Crocus leaves showing - after the predation of the mice I thought we had lost the majority of them. Observing the clusters of small leaves I suspect that while the mice chewed off the leaves and flowers in the process of eating the new corm they tended to leave the old corm which looks to have produced clusters of secondary buds. Bulbs are seasoned survivors and it should not come as a surprise to learn that they have evolved a survival strategy to combat predation.

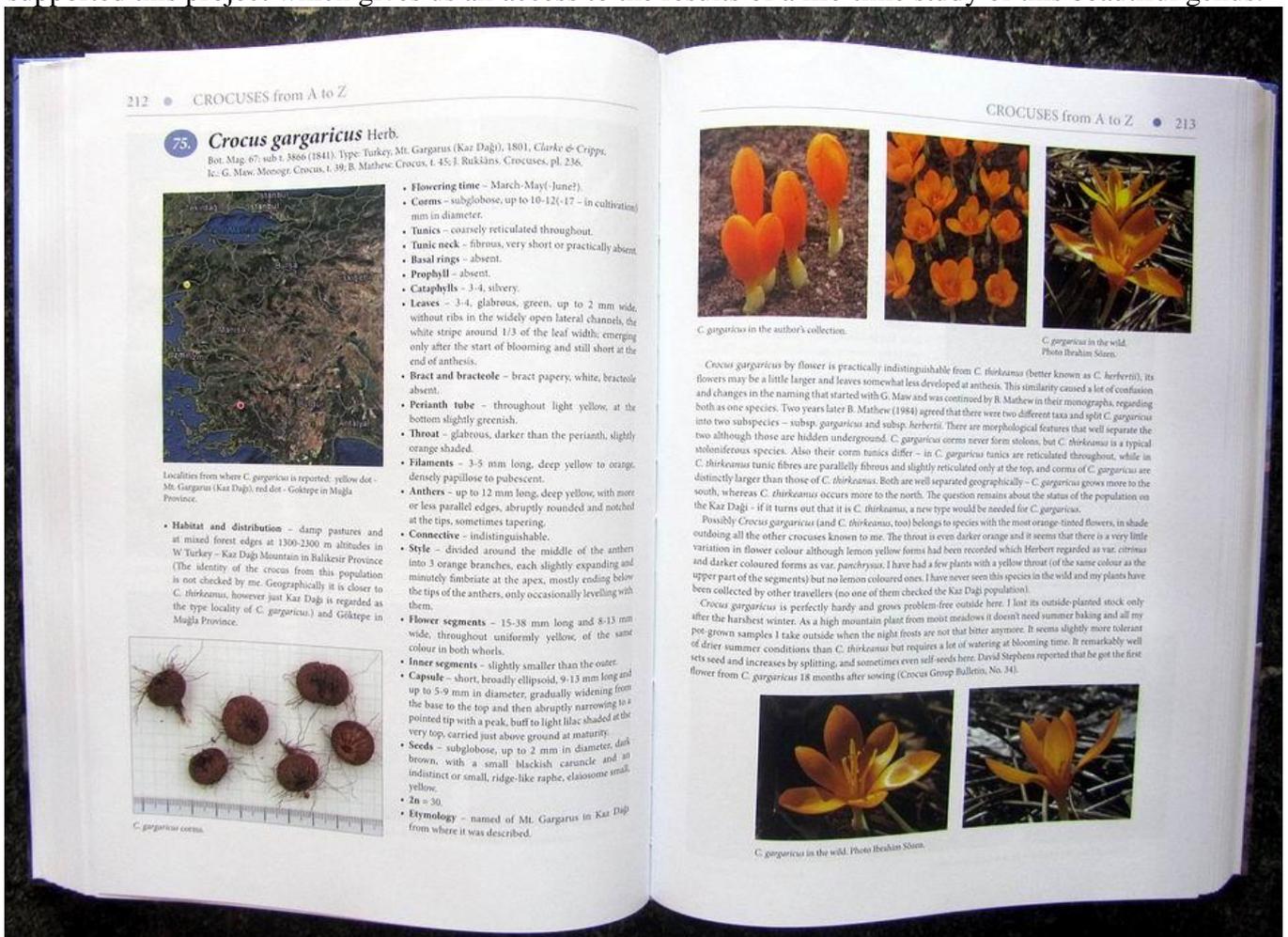


This is the cobble bed pictured the day after the rain storm showing the clusters of leaves poking out from between the cobbles. In many cases the bulb/corm lies directly under where I placed the rocks but the growths simply move sideways then upwards towards the light.

Although such a deluge of rain depresses these gardeners we take heart in the knowledge that the plentiful moisture in the ground will fuel the mass of spring growth there is still to come.



Janis Ruksans' much anticipated new Crocus book has arrived and I am delighted that the Scottish Rock Garden Club supported this project which gives us all access to the results of a life-time study of this beautiful genus.



Many of you will also have helped this project by pre-ordering books which are arriving now - but you may still order by contacting [Janis Ruksans](http://www.janiruksans.com) directly.

## Narcissus seedling

Moving inside the bulb houses there are still plenty of flowers opening.

I am especially attracted to the Narcissus when their stems stay short like this one. Low light levels with the resulting etiolation of the stems is something we have to accept living at this northern latitude but it does not stop me trying to find clones that stay compact like this.



I know that growing so many Narcissus so close together does not help address the problem of etiolation. As you can see this Narcissus seedling growing in the sand bed has little near competition and has stayed nice and short, it is when the bulbs increase forming clumps that the competition for light (as well as moisture and nutrients) intensifies.



**Narcissus  
bulbocodium**

Some forms of  
Narcissus  
bulbocodium  
are among the  
later of the  
hoop petticoat  
types to flower,  
extending the  
flowering  
season well  
into May.

Also opening  
just now are  
many forms of  
Narcissus  
cantabricus.



**Narcissus cantabricus clusii**



**Narcissus cantabricus seedlings ex petuniode form.**



**Narcissus cantabricus monophyllus**



**Narcissus sp. Morocco JCA 1016**

I have never found out the identity of this lovely Narcissus collected by Jim Archibald it is one of the smallest of the group.



Just as I like to mix colours in the garden I love the effect of these accidental plantings of different colours and forms of Narcissus growing in the frit-house sand bed.



**Fritillaria stenantha** is among the first to flower every year.



**Fritillaria alburyana** growing in the sand bed



***Fritillaria alburyana***

Last summer I converted two more plunges in the Fritillaria house over to sand beds where I plant the bulbs directly into the sand – now they are like small gardens - click to see this bed in a [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#).