



BULB LOG 41.....11th October 2017





Artists have been creating still lifes for centuries - here I have created a still life using autumn colours collected from the garden which I then recorded by taking a number of photographs. I have always used the camera to record the garden and, since the introduction of digital photography brought the cost of each individual

image down to almost nothing, I have recorded even more. After I made the still life I tipped the plant material onto newspaper in the glasshouse - two days later it still looks fresh and the colchicums are still opening and closing.



One of nature's countless beauties are ***Paeonia cambessedesii*** seed heads where the plump dark fertile seeds contrast so dramatically with the shrivelled unfertilised red ones.

Views across parts of the garden show the trees reacting to autumn at different rates - some Sorbus have already lost their leaves; Acer leaves are turning brighter by the day while others will remain green well into November.





Autumn is a good time to divide and replant as the ground is still warm enough for any damage to the roots to heal before the onset of winter. I have been meaning to divide this clump of **Uvularia grandiflora** for a few years and now the time has come to grab the spade.



Trillium shoots with Arisaema berries.

Before I start getting in and digging around the clump of *Uvularia* I need to check where I will be standing to make sure I will not damage any shoots. Sure enough right at the edge where I would have placed my feet is a group of *Trillium* shoots about to be swamped by the expanding *Uvularia*.





Uvularia comes into growth some time after the early bulbous plants in this bed have put on their colourful display, making it generally a good companion; however as it spreads it can swamp some of the smaller plants robbing them of light, water and nutrients. I should point out that

it is a good fifteen to twenty years since this Uvularia was planted.



I rescued a tangled mass of the creeping rhizomes of **Anemone ranunculoides** and a number of **Arisaema** tubers from the Uvularia root mass.



In the process of splitting the Uvularia roots I found several more Arisaema tubers along with various Erythronium bulbs all of which were planted back into the hole along with a small division of the Uvularia. This left me with a lot of Uvularia to plant out and as it copes well with shade I have planted it in areas under trees and shrubs where other plants would not do so well.



Small *Uvularia grandiflora* divisions ready for planting.



Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens' and Epimedium root mass.

Over the years I have observed and assessed which plants make good companions and which are too aggressive and liable to swamp smaller less vigorous subjects and many Epimediums fall into the latter category. When an Epimedium seeded into the edge of this bed I was happy to allow it to stay however in recent years it has been spreading too far and its aggressive roots were encroaching on the nearby Trilliums so I have decided to remove it. I carefully separated the Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens' roots which were intertwined with the Epimedium. The Ophiopogon also has a spreading nature but it does not seem to choke the life out of the bulbs which grow happily through its attractive black leaves.





Along the **Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens'** roots I found swollen sections and wondered if, as with a number of other plants, these are stores of nitrogen which could benefit other plants.



Corydalis solida tuber



Fritillaria affinis bulb

I rescued *Corydalis solida* tubers and bulbs of a yellow form of *Fritillaria affinis* from the *Epimedium* roots. This *Corydalis* tuber has three shoots which means that it will produce three flowering stems and at the base of each a new tuber will form. As I was handling the *Fritillaria* bulb I dislodged many of the rice grains each of which will, if conditions are favourable, grow on and in around three years will form a flowering bulb.



As well as lifting and dividing plants I continue to plant out the more mature pots of seed raised plants such as this pot of **Narcissus cyclamineus bulbs**. I would prefer to handle bulbs when there is no root activity but in our cool moist conditions some bulbs, such as these, are in almost perpetual growth with new roots forming before the old ones have died off. As they were growing in a lattice pot of sharp sand it was easy to handle them with minimal damage so I have planted out nearly one hundred Narcissus cyclamineus bulbs in the new bed I am developing.



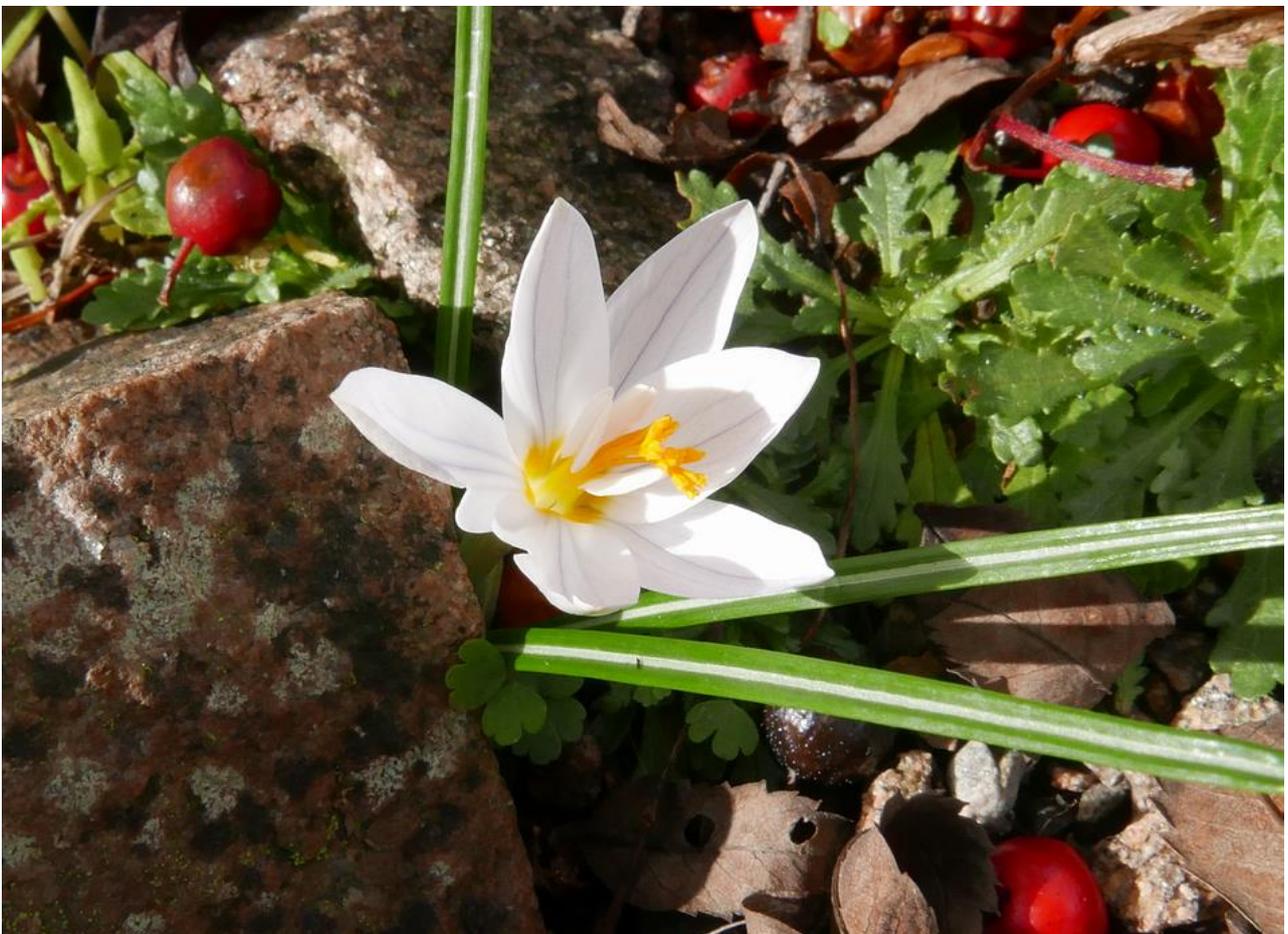
Corydalis temulifolia

Also planted out from the seed frames was this pot of *Corydalis temulifolia*.

After germinating last year (2016) these seedling plants were potted on enmasse into a bigger pot and this year many of them flowered producing a good crop of seed to continue the process.



The first **Crocus laevigatus** flower of this season has appeared in one of the raised slab beds – flowering well ahead of those in the bulb houses.



Crocus laevigatus



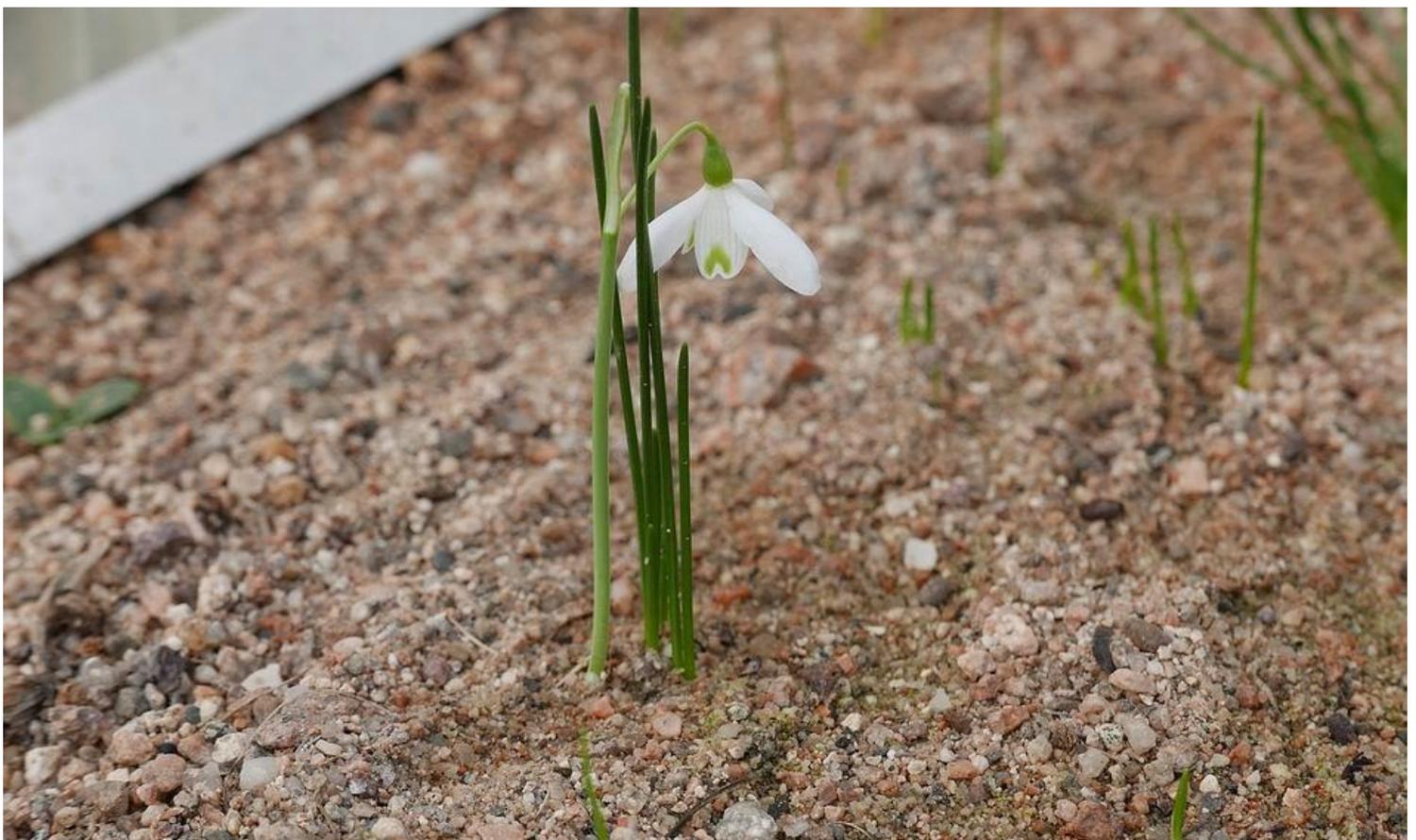
A fine stand of white **Crocus speciosus hybrids** flowering through the decorative foliage of *Cyclamen coum*.



Moving into the bulb houses the growth and flowering is getting under way in the sand beds.



Hyacinthoides lingulata and **Galanthus reginae-olgae** are among the first bulbs to flower in the sand beds starting a season that will give us flowers all through the winter, the spring and into early summer.



Galanthus reginae-olgae



***Crocus pallasii* 'Homeri'**

This beautiful dark anthered form of *Crocus pallasii* was collected from Chios and introduced through Gothenburg Botanic Gardens by J & K Persson.



Sternbergia lutea



Crocus pulchellus*, *Crocus gillanicus*, *Sternbergia clusiana* and *Crocus hadriaticus



Growing the bulbs randomly scattered through in the sand beds and without labels is fun because it is testing my memory and identifications plus I am enjoying immensely the look and ease that growing this way offers.

The excitement of flowering a plant for the first time is still as strong now as it was when we first started out on this journey and that is certainly the case with ***Sternbergia clusiana***.



Sternbergia clusiana



I have long hankered after *Sternbergia clusiana* and was delighted when a friend sent us a small bulb last year – it has grown well in the sand bed and now rewards us with this beautiful flower.

It has many differences from the other *Sternbergia* species we grow in having larger flowers, the segments of which have some substance and on the outer three there is a curious, very pronounced hooked appendage at the tip.

On close inspection this hook is covered with a mass of tiny hair like structures and my thoughts are that these may be to help the flower dissipate it's not very pleasant smell – well to my nose it has a the sort of smell that is more likely to attract flies than bees.



Tropaeolum azureum seedlings

These threadlike *Tropaeolum azureum* seedlings are appearing in the latest plunge that I converted to a sand bed this summer.

In other sandbeds I have a mixture of both *Tropaeolum azureum* and *Tropaeolum tricolor* but in this bed I wanted to keep only *Tropaeolum azureum* so I sowed seeds quite deep in the sand around a month or six weeks ago and now a number of them are germinating. While the growth will be able to climb and mix with the *Tropaeolum tricolor* from the adjacent sand bed giving that fabulous mix of colours, the tubers will be in separate beds.



Tropaeolum azureum seeds



The purely random flowering combinations are very pleasing and as I don't remember everything I put in the sand I am constantly being surprised and challenged by what is coming up.

Here I think it is **Colchicum montanum** with **Cyclamen cilicium** and **C. mirabile** plus **Crocus pulchellus**.





Having a bulb bed instead of lots of pots of bulbs is a refreshing change giving very pleasing results.



I wrote last week that **Crocus mathewii** would send up a second flower and here it is and for now this one is managing to stay upright



Crocus mathewii

Not satisfied with two flowers Crocus mathewii is growing so well in the sand bed it has now sent up a third.

Crocus mathewii is closely related to Crocus pallasii 'Homeri' and as this is the only one in flower just now I am cross pollinating them to see if I get a seed set.



Crocus pallasii 'Homeri'



The last image for this week is **Crocus mathewii** click the link to see more of the sand bed in the latest [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#).....