



BULB LOG 35.....29<sup>th</sup> August 2018





There is a distinct turn in the weather as we leave the record breaking high temperatures of our summer behind and I find myself searching for my gloves to keep the chill from my hands on the early morning dog walk. It is not just me that is noticing the change as the leaves on many plants starting to colour while fruits and seeds swell and ripen.

**Fragaria vesca** (Alpine Strawberry) seeds around the edges of paths especially around some of the troughs where their small fruits provide a tangy sweet flavour that in my view are far superior to their larger commercial cousins.



**Vaccinium smallii** from Japan and **Vaccinium floribundum** from South America both enjoy the growing conditions of our garden and provide us with fruits which as well as being decorative are tasty and end up in my muesli or baked into buns.



The orchid that I was surprised and delighted to discover growing after I cut back a Rhododendron and I believe to be **Epipactis helleborine**, or a close relative, has more flowers open now and I cannot resist sharing another picture with you. This picture may give a false impression that it is bigger than its 20cm height.



**Cyclamen hederifolium**

The coiling stems of fertilised flowers can be seen winding the seed capsule down to sit on top of the corm where they will hold onto their precious contents for the best part of a year before they ripen and open to spill the seed.



**Cyclamen hederifolium**



Dactylorhiza shoots appear through the ground before the end of winter and so are exposed to the extremes of our weather. Early this year I noticed that the leaves of this self-seeded clump had blackened areas which can be a symptom of a deadly fungal attack. My thoughts were that these black areas were the result of the strong freezing winds we

experience which caused damage to a number of our plants. These Dactylorhiza stems have died back much earlier than many similar plants across the garden so I dug down through the gravel and lifted the tubers.



I was very pleased to see that the new tubers were indeed healthy with no signs of the black spots that are symptomatic of the fungal diseases.



beds and other areas where I would like them to establish - they germinate best in areas that are not disturbed and low in nutrients.

All the *Dactylorhiza* orchids that are currently growing in our garden are self-sown. The original ones that we bought in as tubers have long since succumbed to the fungal diseases: however, before they were wiped out they left a legacy of seed and we started to find seedlings appearing in the most unlikely of places and we now have a large healthy population of garden hybrids. As you will see from the picture above at least two new tubers are formed at the sides of the previous year's tuber so they quickly form clumps. When the clumps start to get too large the competition for water and nutrients between the closely packed tubers put them under stress making them more susceptible to fungal attacks so it is best to lift and divide them every two or three years before they become congested.

I have described how I lift and divide them in a number of [Bulb Logs](#).

There are also three Bulb Log Video Diary Supplements showing the method and results. [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#) and [Part 3](#).

There are plenty of healthy *Dactylorhiza* stems shedding their seeds right now and I often remove the seed capsules to help by spreading them around the troughs, raised



It is not just my cold hands on the morning walk that are detecting the changing season these colchicum bulbs were lifted a few weeks ago have lain in a tray waiting to be replanted and already you can see the growth bud at the bottom of the foot is swelling. On the left you can see what remains of last year's bulb now dried out and replaced by the new one which in turn will be replaced by the swelling bud on the foot.

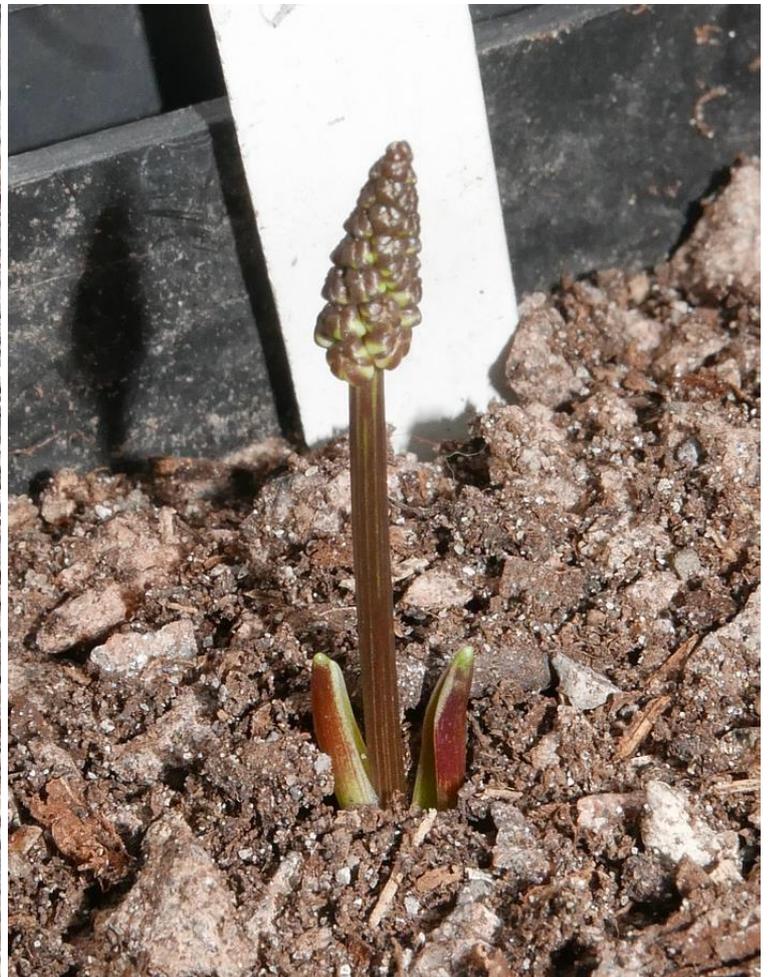


Even though these **Tropaeolum tricolorum** corms were kept completely dry the shoots emerging from them show they have also detected it is time to start into growth. They will be watered on the 1<sup>st</sup> September when the roots will start to grow then they must not be allowed to dry out – if those roots get dry they will retreat into dormancy.



***Acis autumnalis***

The flowers of *Acis autumnalis* have also responded to the changing season, even though they are under glass and still completely dry, by sending up their flowers.



*Scilla* species sitting in a still-dry sand bed have also started into leaf growth, these will not flower until spring while the flowers shoot of the autumn flowering *Scilla obtusifolia* is already well developed.



I am pleased to see the very beautiful **Crocus scharojanii flavus** is one that has survived the predation of the mice that have been eating so many of our crocus in recent years.



We first got this shrub some thirty years ago as an bi-generic **Gaultheria x Pernettya hybrid** however since then Pernettya has apparently been sunk into Gaultheria.



The flowers are small and easily missed however the clusters of white fruits are attractive.



**Gaultheria x Pernettya hybrid and *Gaultheria depressa* var. *novae-zelandiae***



It is worth looking closely at the fruits of *Gaultheria depressa* var. *novae-zelandiae* when you will see that the seed is held in a dry capsule surrounded by the fleshy swollen calyx.



The drive way planting is also in fruit with seeds and berries a plenty.



**Hypericum and Actea rubra berries** are very attractive but as I do not want them to seed around here I will remove them before they are ready to shed.



**Geranium sanguineum in seed.**



The closer you look at your plants the more you will get back from them. I am constantly fascinated by the inventiveness of nature and here the sling shot type dispersal mechanism of the Geranium seed reminds me of those ball throwers that dog walkers often use - and long before that early humans invented and used spear throwers to increase the throwing distance of their weapons - however nature got there first.

Engineers and designers since Leonardo de Vinci look to learn from nature's structures and adaptations.

Digitalis grandiflora has a simple dispersal system where the capsule splits shedding the seeds however Mutisa below has evolved a very efficient method of dispersal.



**Mutisia seed head.**



These seeds glide on the wind travelling great distances. This method is widely adopted in the plant world and could well be where Leonardo, a keen observer of nature, got his idea for his drawings predicting parachutes.



As well as providing a generous source of plants for the future seed stems can be attractive even these poppy and grass stems add a decorative screen to the Campanula persicifolia flowers beyond.



**Trillium kurubayashii** seed is into the front garden where I am happy to leave it to grow – I did scatter it around a bit after taking this picture.



The next sequence of images show some of the other seeds and flowers attracting my attention in the front garden.

**Rosa sericea**



**Veratrum fimbriatum** with very chewed leaves.



This Paeonia seed capsule is just splitting to reveal the stunning colour combination of the fertile shiny purple seeds contrasting with the bright red ones that have not been fertilised.



Lily seed pods.



An accidental colour combination between this hybrid lily and dark flowered form of *Cyclamen hederifolium* below.





**Roscoe 'Harvington Imperial'**

Roscoe 'Harvington Imperial' has appeared a number of times in recent weeks as I share value that this floriferous form brings to the garden, here some five weeks after the first flower opened it is showing no signs of slowing down with a number of flower buds waiting to take their turn in the limelight.



**Podophylum hexandrum** fruits showing the first signs of turning red.



Likewise these **Ariseama** berries will turn bright red in the coming weeks.



**Peony and lily seed pods.**



**Larch cones.**



Wild strawberry plants surround this pot with a bonsai larch that produces cones every year. Even when you think there is not much of interest in your garden get out and look carefully – you will be amazed at what you can find.

Click the link to join me in my latest [Bulb Log Video Dairy Supplement](#)