



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 30.....25th July 2018





I made these tiny troughs from leftover cement when I was making cement covered fish box troughs more than ten years ago – they were landscaped and planted with unrooted cuttings during a one of my workshop demonstrations.

Since then they have received very little attention except the occasional watering and liquid feed.



I decided that using such a small shallow container was a good way to illustrate how you can greatly increase the planting depth, improve the habitat and enhance the environment in troughs by being bold with rocks when you are landscaping.

These two have been established for a few years less than the original two - the one on the left got knocked by a hunting Westie dislodging one of the rocks and disturbing the root run of one of the saxifrages and you can observe how that has affected the growth when compared to the same saxifrages in the right hand trough.



Notice the ground is wet – we have had some very welcome rain which provided relief for the drought stricken plants. No amount of water from a hose or watering cans can ever provide the same benefit of some natural rain.

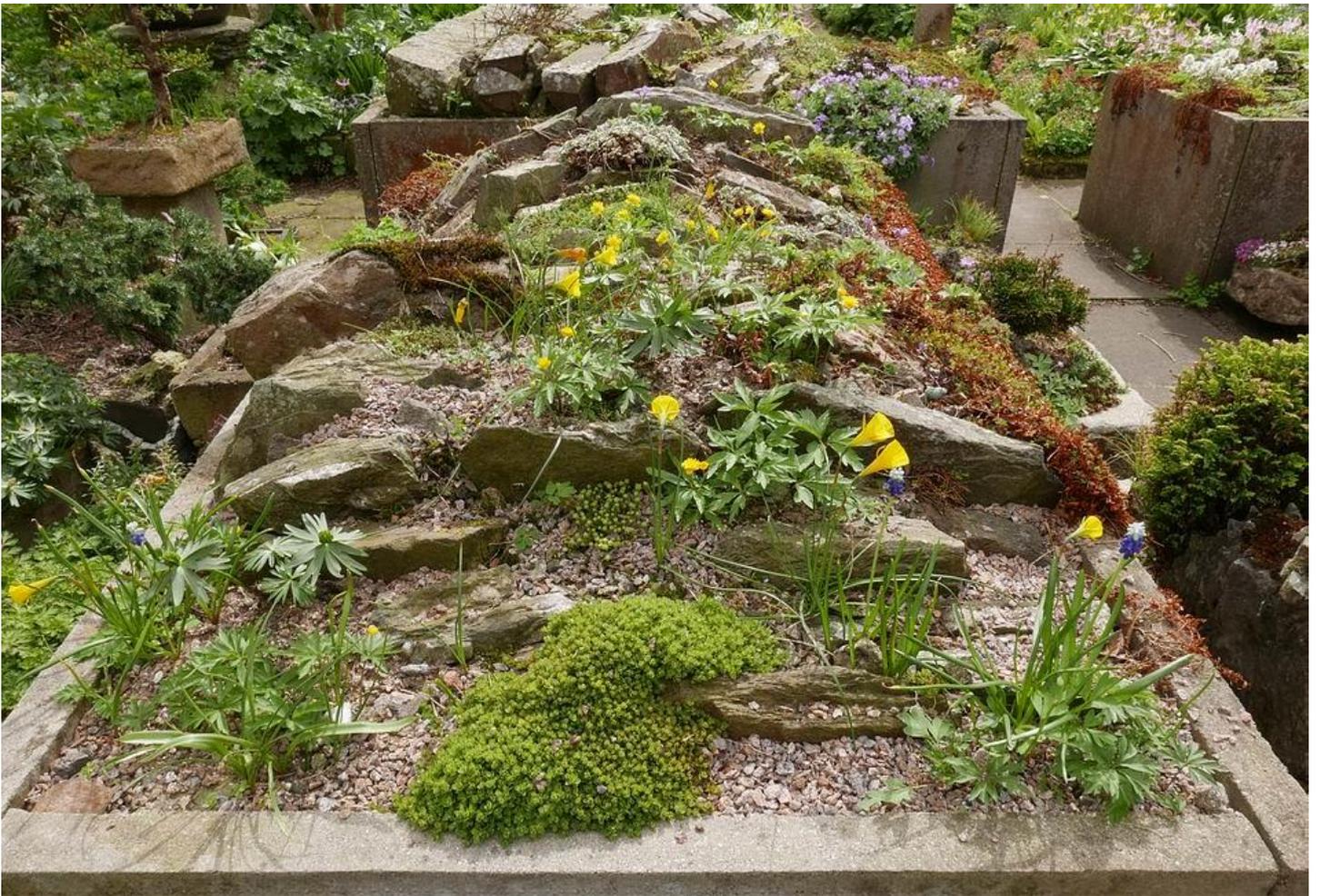


Most of the saxifrages and alpine type plants, having flowered in the spring, go into a resting stage in the summer and then put on growth again as the temperatures cool down. Here in Aberdeen this happens in mid to late August and that is the ideal time to take cuttings and plant out young plants.



I landscaped the trough in the background a number of years ago but did not plant it however I let a mossy saxifrage that seeded in grow and as you see it covered the entire trough hiding the rocks with the exception of the large upright one. A month ago I removed the mossy saxifrage to reveal the rock and planted it up with cuttings that I had taken in the early spring picture on the right and below.





Photographed in the spring Narcissus and Anemone provide colour in this slab bed, in the foreground looking like a cushion plant is *Cyananthus lobatus* and beyond there are a number of plants of *Cyananthus microphyllus* emerging.



The same bed looks very different now the *Cyananthus* have grown to their typical sprawling habitat.



Cyananthus lobatus

While we received this plant as Cyananthus lobatus I have some doubts if it is that species I suspect it may be a hybrid. It is a good plant that will continue to flower until the winter frosts push it back underground.





As the flowers last a short time I plant the troughs as I do the rest of the garden with foliage in mind – the next sequence of images show the variation and interest the foliage delivers.





This trough is planted with New Zealand plants including Aciphylla, Cyathodes and ferns.



One of the keys to being considered a good gardener is knowing the plants that grow well for you. Over the years *Saxifraga cochlearis minor*, seen here taking over one side of this trough, has proven itself here.

Another silver saxifrage covers this trough and has been joined by *Erinus alpinus* and *Dactylorhiza* orchids which have seeded in.



There are three saxifrages in this trough one flowers in the spring, the one on the left flowers in the summer and the pale green rosettes are *Saxifraga brunonis* which produces small yellow flowers in late summer into autumn.



The most decorative part of *Saxifraga brunonis* is the pale green rosettes and the mass of bright red thread-like runners produced at this time of year. At the tip of each runner is a tiny plant which roots if it touches suitable ground or these can

be removed and rooted in moist sand or other medium.



A small trough landscaped with broken concrete and planted with a selection of sempervivium.



This summer's unfamiliar hot dry weather has proved too much for some plants such as this cushion forming *Azorella* sp. which has succumbed to the drought.

The picture below shows the dead remains removed to reveal the rock work.

I will rework and plant this trough when the weather cools down and the

familiar rains return.

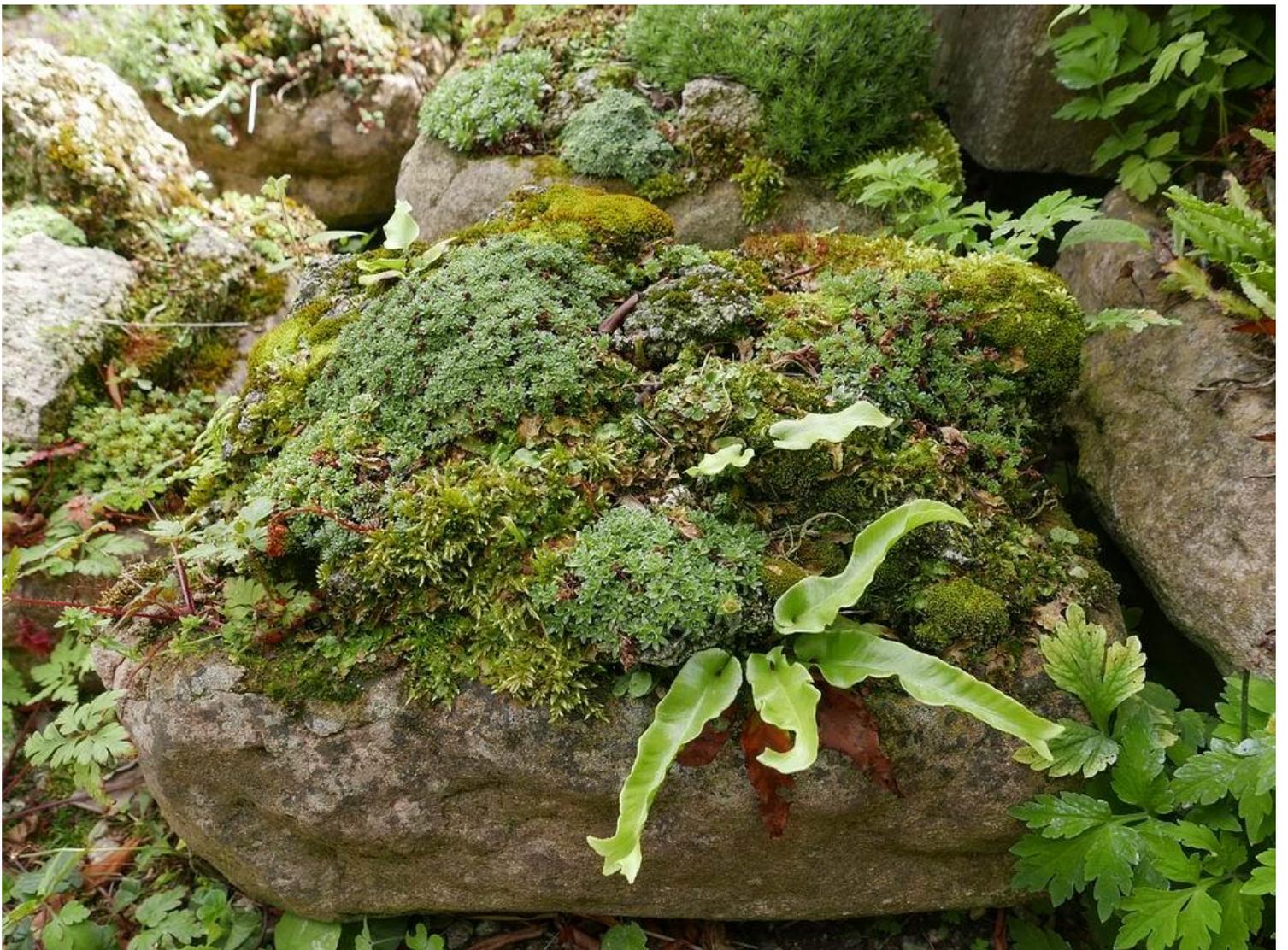




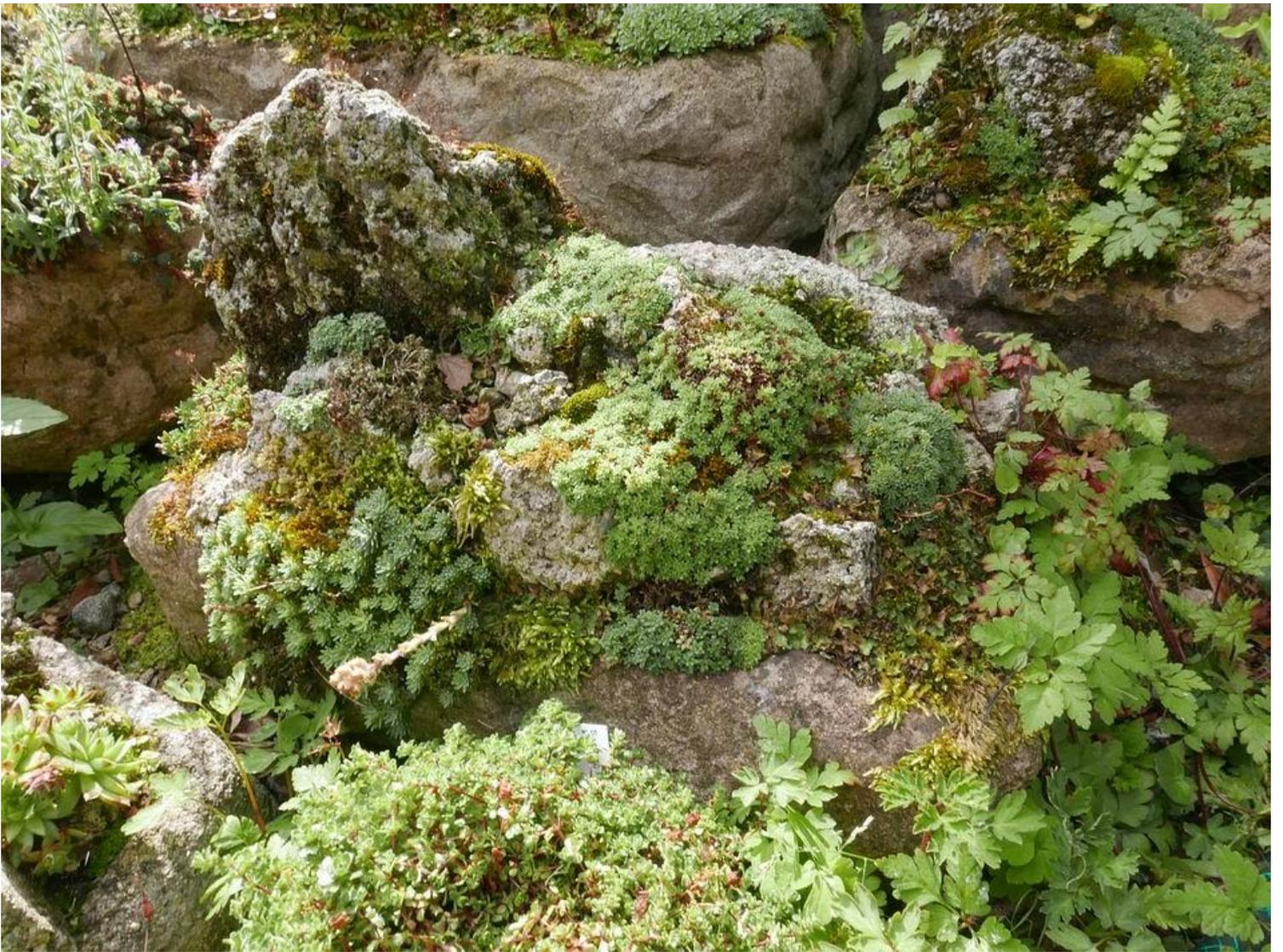
Over many years I have selected and propagated from the plants that best tolerate our normal cool moist summers and this year some of them are facing a new challenge of getting scorched in the sunshine. Because of our cool climate I have not previously had to consider the positioning of these troughs but this year has highlighted the benefit of having the troughs in some shade – in most normal years I describe Scotland as being in shade.



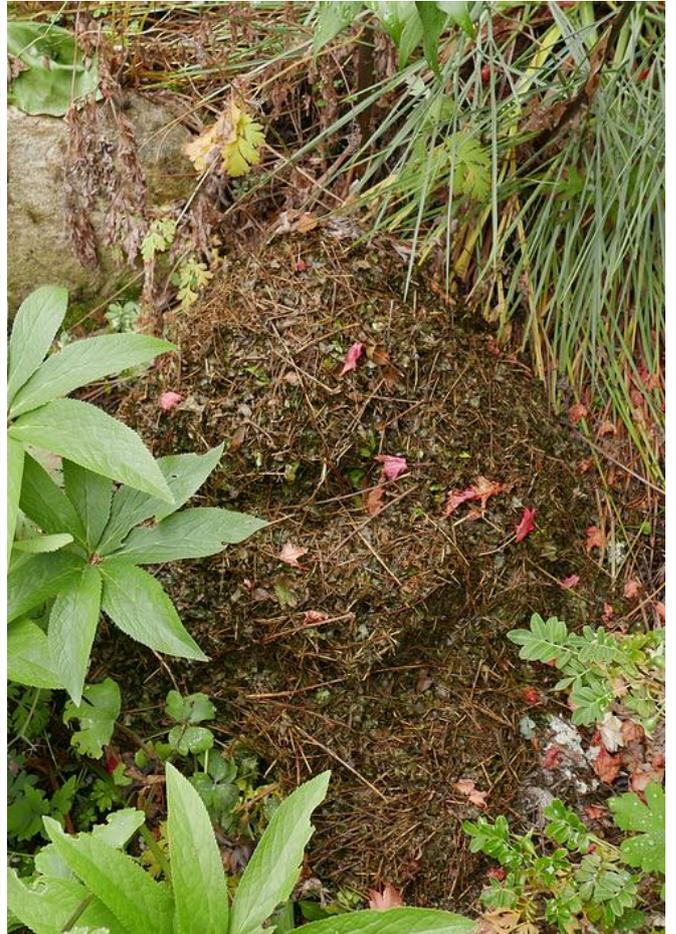
Compare the state of this trough which was exposed to more sun with the one below which was in shade for much of the day.



Gardening is a continual learning process and as the positioning of the troughs is something I have to reconsider or I have to adapt the planting to plants that can tolerate the warmer sunnier conditions.



It is time for the annual hedge cutting and I have been working my way around, cutting them hard back.



Hedge clippings are shredded then piled to compost for a few months before being spread out as a mulch.





While I do have to work my way through repotting all the bulbs in pots over the next month the sand beds require much less work.



Basically all I need to do is remove all the dried remains from the surface but I cannot resist delving into the sand, like a lucky dip, to see how the bulbs are growing.



The corms of **Crocus pallasii 'Homeri'** are increasing well and some also produced a few seeds which I simply sow back into the sand.

I am very encouraged so far with bulbs are growing well - long term I will have to lift and divide the bulbs that form clumps and will also have to remove some of the surplus to prevent the sand bed from becoming over crowded



One thing I will have to watch was highlighted in the recent rain which revealed a leak in the roof – I will either have to sort the drip or respond by using bulbs that can tolerate or require a moist summer around that small area.



Megan

A sad postscript, yesterday one of our beloved small whites, Megan, passed away after a brief illness: she was 12. I know that many of you enjoyed seeing Megan and Molly appearing from time to time in the Bulb Log and the Video Diary Supplements they followed on from their predecessors the famous Miss Lily and Poppy. Our hearts are full of sadness and loss but I am glad to say that Molly will continue to help me in the garden and make appearances.

Run free Megan.....