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Bulb Log Diary

ISSN 2514-6114

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BULB LOG 34.....21st August 2019



Cyananthus lobatus



It is a few weeks now since the first flower opened on **Cyananthus lobatus**: now it is really enriching the garden with a colourful display of its violet blue flowers. With plenty more buds to come, growth will continue well into October and depending on when the weather turns cold, it can flower through November.



Codonopsis microphylla



The *Cyananthus* spread out across and down the sides of one of the slab beds surrounded by various troughs.



The right hand side of this trough is dominated by the bright green rosettes of *Saxifraga brunonis* - a plant that has more decorative value in its foliage and the bright red runners produced earlier in the season, [Bulb Log 2813](#), than it is for its flowers – did you notice the flower?



Saxifaga brunonis

The small yellow flowers which are not produced in great numbers rise from the single rosettes. This plant wants to be on the move as every year new rosettes are sent out on long thin red runners to search for new habitats in which to set down roots and indeed, even though it has never set seed, it has managed to migrate - establishing itself in several adjacent troughs and raised beds.



Saxifaga brunonis



Epipactis helleborine

Last year when cutting back and removing some shrubs to open up the ground planting area I was delighted to find a small plant of *Epipactis helleborine* growing under one of the *Rhododendrons* see [Bulb Log 3319](#) . So as not to disturb it I decided not to remove the stump and roots of that rhododendron however the orchid has not appeared this year. I am always cautious at jumping to conclusions but I do wonder if it was reliant on the rhododendron being alive however there may be other reasons why it has not come up this year.



Shortly after finding the first *Epipactis helleborine* at the top of the garden I discovered another under this pine that has been growing in a small concrete container for thirty years. I have no idea how this plant got there I speculate that the tiny dust like seeds of this plant must be blown in on the wind and if they land in a suitable habitat then they will grow.

Orobanche hederæ

My philosophy is that a gardener is a habitat manipulator as we try to provide suitable growing conditions for a wide range of plants, however some plants have other ideas and choose their own, often unlikely, habitats in which to grow.

While putting out one of the wheelie-bins this week I was surprised and delighted to find this tall flowering stem of *Orobanche hederæ*, commonly called the Ivy Broomrape, growing among the bins.

Many years ago we did get some seed which we scattered among the ivy growing on the wall below the front hedge and after a number of years we did spot a single flower stem but

since then we have seen nothing. There could easily have been flowers in previous years that we did not notice and from the size of this flowering stem I suspect that this is not the first time it has flowered. *Orobanche hederæ* is a parasitic plant without chlorophyll totally dependent on its ivy host so I will be watching for the seed to ripen so I can scatter it around other areas where we have ivy especially along the back wall.





Orobanche hederaceae



I am working on re-potting some of the Erythronium -concentrating on those that have not been done for a number of years. Since it was last planted an extensive growth of hedge and tree roots have forced their way in to plunder the nutrients and leafmould in the compost of this mesh basket.



The emptied out contents show just how intense the competition for the available nutrients and moisture between the Erythronium bulbs and the invading roots must have been.

Even with additional annual feeding as they increase in number the Erythronium bulbs would start to suffer from the competition from each other as well as these hungry roots.



The mineral content of the potting mix is still good so I just refresh it by adding some additional humus in the form of leafmould and nutrients, N and P, with some bonemeal.



Erythronium bulbs last one year but are replaced by a new bulb the remains of the previous bulbs can often be seen towards the base where they remain like links in a chain.



Erythronium 'Eirene' bulbs

Some Erythronium bulbs, especially the cultivars and hybrids, will form offsets such as shown above where the top row is of the original bulbs and the smaller bulbs in the bottom row being the newest offsets.



Some of the bulbs are replaced back into the mesh basket spaced out on a layer of the refreshed potting mix – in this case the surplus has been planted into the garden.



Next I add a layer of leafmould before filling the basket up with the rest of the potting mix and plunging it back into one of the sand beds.



Erythronium 'Susannah' , a sister seedling of 'Eirene', also increases well as you can see by the number of bulbs in this basket.



Erythronium 'Susannah' bulbs



These are the bulbs of one of the ***Erythronium revolutum*** hybrids that I am trialling to assess if they are worthy of being named and distributed - as you can see above and below they make good sized strong bulbs and increase well so they are passing that test.





From the large mature *Erythronium* bulbs in the previous pictures to some small seedling bulbs grown from a wild collection of an *Erythronium* species, related to *Erythronium grandiflorum*, found on Mount Prevost, Vancouver Island. I do not normally replot bulbs seedling so soon but I am keen to study more of this species in flower so I have moved them from a seed pot into a mesh basket.



*Fritillaria
pyrenaica*



These are first year seedling Narcissus bulbs pictured along with some of the empty seed cases that they grew from. The seeds did not all germinate at the same time which is reflected in some being more mature having developed a darker outside skin.



I would normally leave bulb seedlings for two or three years before repotting them but as I used a bought-in John Innes compost for the first time last year I wanted to see how it was standing up and I am glad that I did. I mixed the JI with equal parts of 6mm grit and you can see above how much the humus part of that mix has degraded in one year making the potting mix even leaner than I would like.



Having discovered the degradation of the mix I decided to check on some of the other first year bulb seedlings such as these *Narcissus bulbocodium* seedlings and when I tipped them out I was surprised to find that they were already in growth so I handled them very carefully and got them quickly into some new potting mix.



While the mature *Narcissus* bulbs can withstand a dry summer tiny seedlings may suffer if they become too hot and dry so I always ensure that they get some light watering through the hottest periods and shaded from direct sunshine.



A number of allium have now finished flowering and are in seed in this sand bed.



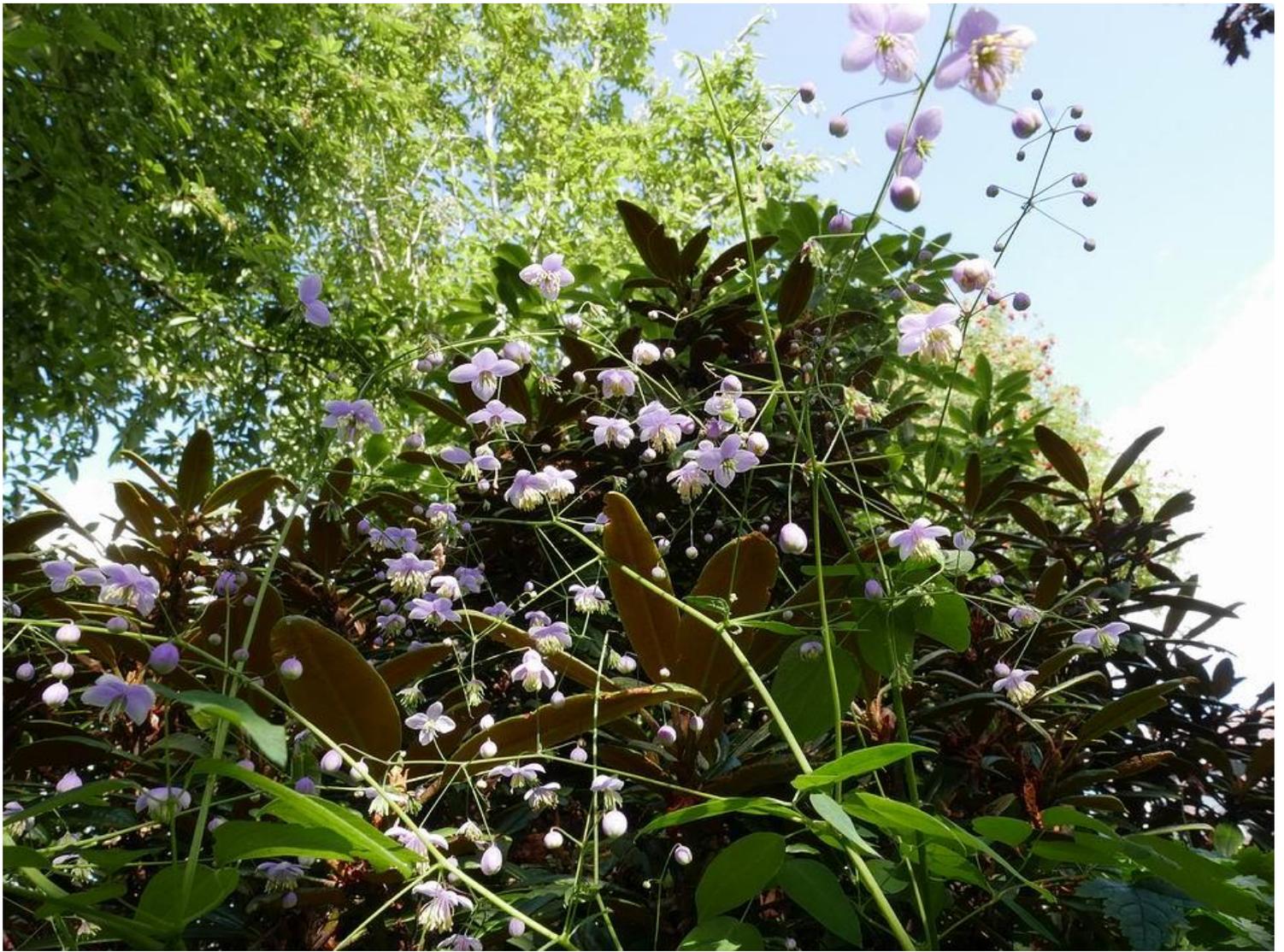
Allium crispum seed heads.



With just a few weeks left before I apply the first storm, watering, there are still some flowers on the ***Triteleia ixioides*** - meaning that I have almost achieved my goal of being able to have something in flower all year round in the sand bed.



Lysimachia paridiformis stenophylla



Thalictrum species



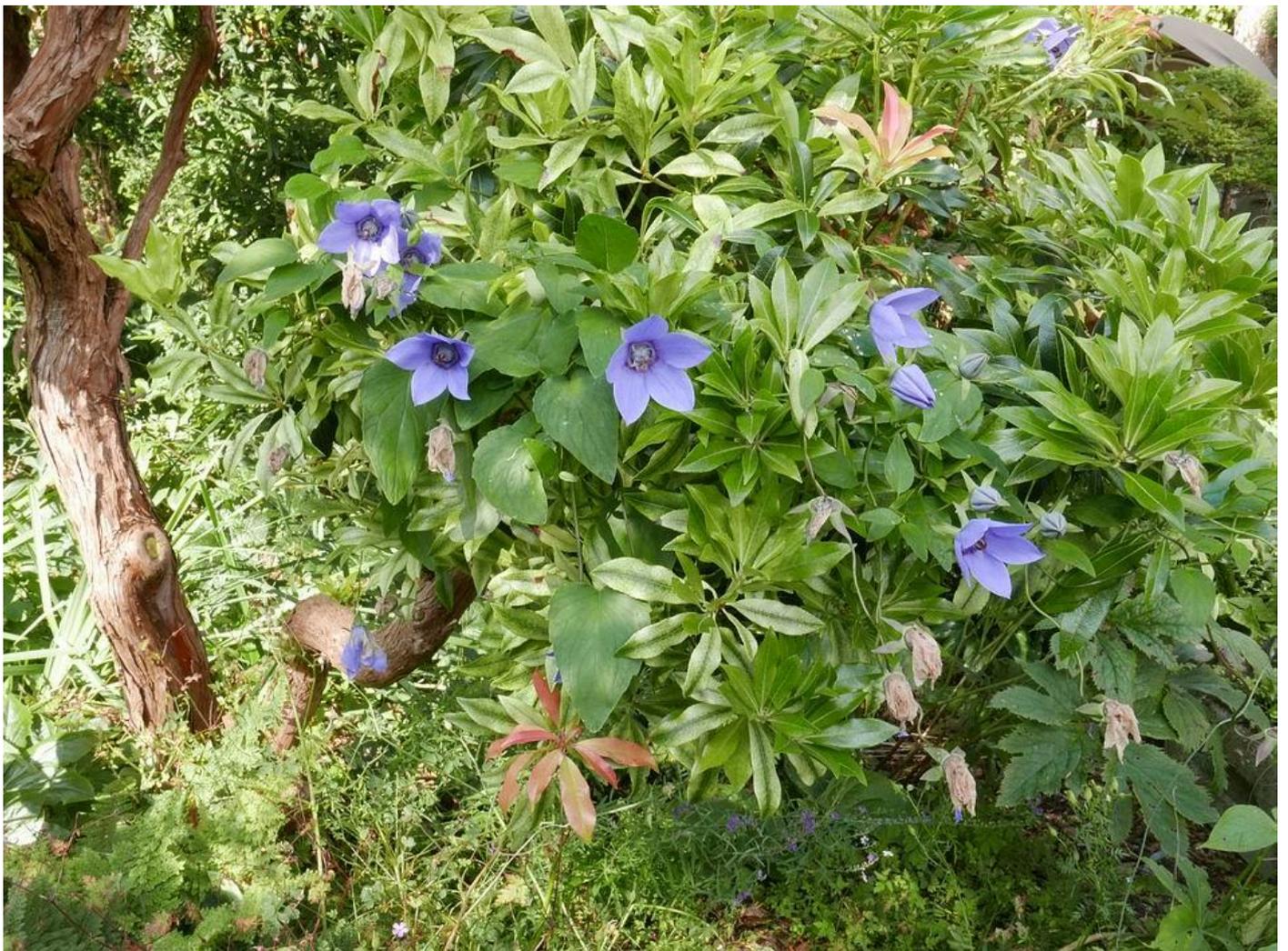
Thalictrum species

The masses of small flowers on this *Thalictrum* species catch the sun light and attract the constant attentions of masses of hoverflies.



Codonopsis grey-wilsonii





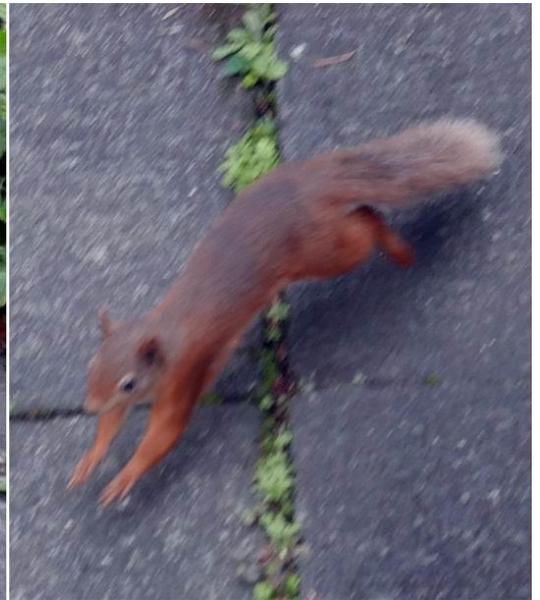
Codonopsis grey-wilsonii



Roscoeae 'Harvington Imperial'



Spot the Squirrel



I was very excited to spot this Squirrel in the garden: we do see the occasional grey squirrel but this is the first time I have seen a red one here. There are red squirrels in the woods around half a mile away and I was hopeful that they may have found their way to our garden but on checking I am now doubtful if it is a red squirrel – I think it may be a red variant of a grey.

They are not the sharpest pictures as they were taken at some distance and through the windows but if any of you can be more positive on the identification I would like to know your opinion.....