



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 34.....25th August 2021



Roscoeae 'Harvington Imperial'

The look in the garden is slowly morphing as the late summer plants such as *Roscoe* 'Harvington Imperial' start to flower. They take over from the summer flowers which have not done so well this year mostly due to the unusually long dry periods we have experienced in our garden. Many of our plants that flower through the summer such as *Primula*, *Lilies* etc. are accustomed to summer rainfall which we normally get plenty of, but this year these plants have had their growing season cut short due to the dryness which will also be reflected next year as the plants and bulbs have not had the water to build up a reserve of growth. One group of plants that have not suffered from the dryness are these ***Primula florindae*** growing in a marginal bed beside the pond.



Although the occasional flower of this ***Cyananthus lobatus hybrid*** can appear towards the end of July it is one of the plants that I use as an indicator of the changing of the season from summer to autumn when the mass of flowers start to open.



The small flowers of this white form of **Geranium robertianum** are tiny when compared to those of the *Cyananthus* however while sitting on the swing seat I noticed a constant stream of honey bees visiting this bed all going to the small white flowers rather than the larger blue ones. It is in my nature when I make observations such as this to ask why the bees are attracted to the smaller white flowers or is it that the blue ones have nothing to attract them so I had to investigate. On first looking at the flowers I noticed that the pollen of the *Geranium* was presented

prominently at the mouth of the flower while it was deep in the throat of the *Cyananthus* flower and difficult for Bees to reach.



I then sectioned a flower to investigate further and found that there was no fertile pollen on the anthers of this hybrid flower compared here with a fertile flower of *Cyananthus microphyllus* – this would also explain why in all the years we have grown this plants that we have never had any seed from it. It seems that the bees knew more than this gardener until now!



Roscoe 'Harvington Imperial' rises up through what **remains** of the carpet of foliage driven back prematurely by the dry conditions – the rain we have been having in recent weeks came too late for these plants - they had already decided to shut down until next season.



The appearance of **Cyclamen hederifolium** flowers are another indicator that the season is changing.



Cyclamen hederifolium appears across a number of habitats in the garden but in nothing like the numbers I see in the mass flowerings of more southerly established gardens.



In addition to the plants whose flowering season we are entering some plants such as **Phyllodoce caerulea** will often provide us with a second out of season flowering.



Some shaded areas still have a reasonable cover of foliage that has not been so badly affected by the drought – to the centre right, the light coloured flower buds of **Veratrum fimbriatum** stand out against the dark background even though they have yet to open.



The 'new bed beside the pond' needs some selection work in removing unwanted seedlings to prepare it for the return of the autumn flowering Crocus which I hope are still thriving in their underground habitat.



Refreshed by the recent rain some plants, Hellebores, Epimedium and ferns will hold on to their leaves throughout the winter while others are herbaceous, turning colour and dying back providing a short lived contrast.





Rhododendron rex fictolacteum

As a result of the drought the new growth of the larger rhododendrons has hardly moved but hopefully now the moisture has returned they will make some effort to catch up. However such conditions reach beyond the current season and I doubt if there will be enough growth time left for them to produce many flowering buds for next year.



Rhododendron bureavii



These rhododendrons are of a significant size already so as long as they stay healthy we are not worried if the new growth is that bit shorter this year.



Garden habitats



This is one of the fish boxes where we grow some of our *Corydalis* 'Craigton Purple' for propagation and now is the best time to split it.



Once it is tipped out I can separate the clusters of scaly roots that have formed over the last two years.



To get the fastest increase you are best to split it every year but we did not get round to this box last year so it has built up a considerable amount of scaly bulb like roots.



Corydalis 'Craigton Purple'

Every bit, even the tiny scaly sections, will grow into a new plant so it is worth spending the time to split it. I have distributed some of the larger clumps to selected nurseries before replanting the small sections to repeat the process of increase over the next few years. Unlike Corydalis 'Craigton Blue' which likes to spread out slowly moving around the garden Corydalis 'Craigton Purple' stays in clumps that form lush green cushion like mounds of leaves in the autumn which stay green all through the winter to be topped off by the spikes of purple flowers in June.



Where ever I go I am constantly observing and thinking about habitats and we have set out to create many of them in our garden but others are initially unintended but then the plants will show us the way.



For many years we have weeded the plants that grew in the cracks between the paving slabs but gradually we have accepted and indeed learned to admire certain plants that choose to grow in these crevices - especially the ones growing around the troughs.



The Wild Strawberry, **Fragaria vesca**, looks nice, is beneficial for the garden wild life and provides me with a tasty snack while I write the Bulb Log see below.





Most of our troughs are raised off the ground but a few, such as this one, are sitting directly on the paving slab and that has created an unintended habitat. As if it is not enterprising enough that so many plants can grow in the narrowest of gaps between the slabs, seeds of *Papaver somniferum* and *Erinus alpinus* have taken advantage of the moisture and dirt gathered under the trough to germinate and grow.



There are habitats to be found within habitats such as in this small trough, shown below, where *Erinus alpinus* has seeded into the moss that got a hold in the moist crack on the top of this piece of hard volcanic rock.



One thing you will learn quickly is that habitats as gardens are constantly evolving they cannot be frozen in a perpetual state and that is what makes them fascinating and sometimes frustrating when without a lot of work and constant replanting we cannot hold them in a particular stage of evolution.



In many ways this rock island in the pond is like a trough - at first it was the moss that grew over it creating the conditions to allow a sequence of other plants to grow including the current occupants such as *Dactylorhiza* and *Corydalis*.



I loved this stage in the evolution of the rock island with the small colony of **Pinguicola grandiflora** which are the only plants that we actively established on the island all the others have seeded there by themselves including the Dactylorhiza, the seed leaves of which can also be seen in this picture.



I loved this version of the island but had problems with foraging birds pulling off the moss scattering it along with the Pinguicola into the pond so I placed a protective wire mesh over the surface.



The mesh stabilised the surface however the evolution process continued with other plants seeding in to the detriment of the *Pinguicula* which sadly are no longer there. Following on I placed a semi submerged trough alongside the rock which to date I have left to its own devices to see what appeared and it is interesting to observe what is growing in a marginal, constantly wet habitat.



Among the plants that have arrived and thrived are ***Linaria purpurea*** and ***Tanacetum parthenium*** but I have ideas to remove these and try to establish some other plants as this evolving watery habitat continues.....