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Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 20.....19th May 2021



Erythronium hendersonii hybrid



This plant is one of many that self-seeded into this narrow bed at the side of a path - on checking the flowers, see cover picture, I can tell that it is a hybrid of *Erythronium hendersonii*.

The reason it only has a single leaf is the other one got ripped off during the strong winds that raged through the garden for three days last month.

Where the species share a habitat or grow close enough to have a common pollinator *Erythronium* hybrids often occur in the wild so it should be no surprise to find so many in our garden where we have lots of species growing.



Yellow flowered *Erythronium grandiflorum* along with white *Erythronium elegans* and *E. montanum* are among those currently flowering in this bed, where several other species bloomed earlier in the season.



The flowers of Erythronium 'Minnehaha' can be seen on the right with a very similar looking seedling that appeared a number of years ago, growing in the stems of the small shrub.





Yet another similar seedling put itself into the edge of the sand bed - these are all individual seedlings so clonally different, but if they were mixed together it would be difficult if not impossible tell them apart. I believe they are all seedlings from 'Minnehaha' with the proviso that we also grow a colony of one of its parents, *Erythronium oregonum*, in this bed, so a back cross cannot be ruled out.

Many of the hybrids are fertile and capable of producing seed, although there are often less seeds in a hybrid capsule than that of a species; you can see how speciation in the wild happens.

When a hybrid produces a stable line that, due to hybrid vigour may be more successful, it could outcompete the parents becoming the dominant plant in a habitat – over time and through many generations this is how some new species have occurred and in some cases it is speculated that one or both of the parents of some of the species we now recognise have become extinct.



Many hybrids occur in our garden and I spend hours observing them - some readily form clumps indicating they would make good garden plants but I have resisted naming too many cultivars and only then after extensive trials. I have been written about these four pink flowered *Erythronium revolutum* hybrids before see [Bulb Log 1920](#).



Last year I asked for feedback on cultivars A, B, C and D and got a range of likes showing that there is a subjective element in assessing plants. One feature I pointed out was that these four clones do not all flower at the same time

Clone D flowers some weeks after the earliest one and with our weather this year that has proven a big advantage.

Clone D is the one I am featuring in these images and is on the right in the group picture above its flowers missed all the cold wet weather and so stands out head and shoulders as the best this season but I am aware that depending on the weather that could all change next year.



Clone D flowers which due to the cold conditions and like all the pink erythroniums has a stronger colour this year.



Clone A is the pinkest with a strong yellow centre, red/brown zonal markings and narrower petals. All clones commonly have three flowers to a stem, this one has four.



This group of *Erythronium elegans* seedlings is growing in a sand bed at the side of the house where I sowed the seeds directly in the sand of the frame. It is relatively isolated from the other flowers in the garden and I have been cross pollinating between the sibling seedlings so there is the best chance that the seed will be true. When I have collected the seed I will lift the bulbs and plant them into the garden, then later in the summer I will sow the new seed in the sand to start the same process again.



Erythronium elegans



Erythronium elegans growing in the garden.



There is a hypothesis that *Erythronium elegans* evolved some thousands of years ago from a stable hybrid between *Erythronium revolutum* and *montanum* and indeed in our garden it hybridises with both these species. This hybrid is one of a group of ***Erythronium elegans* x *revolutum*** that seeded into the gravel.

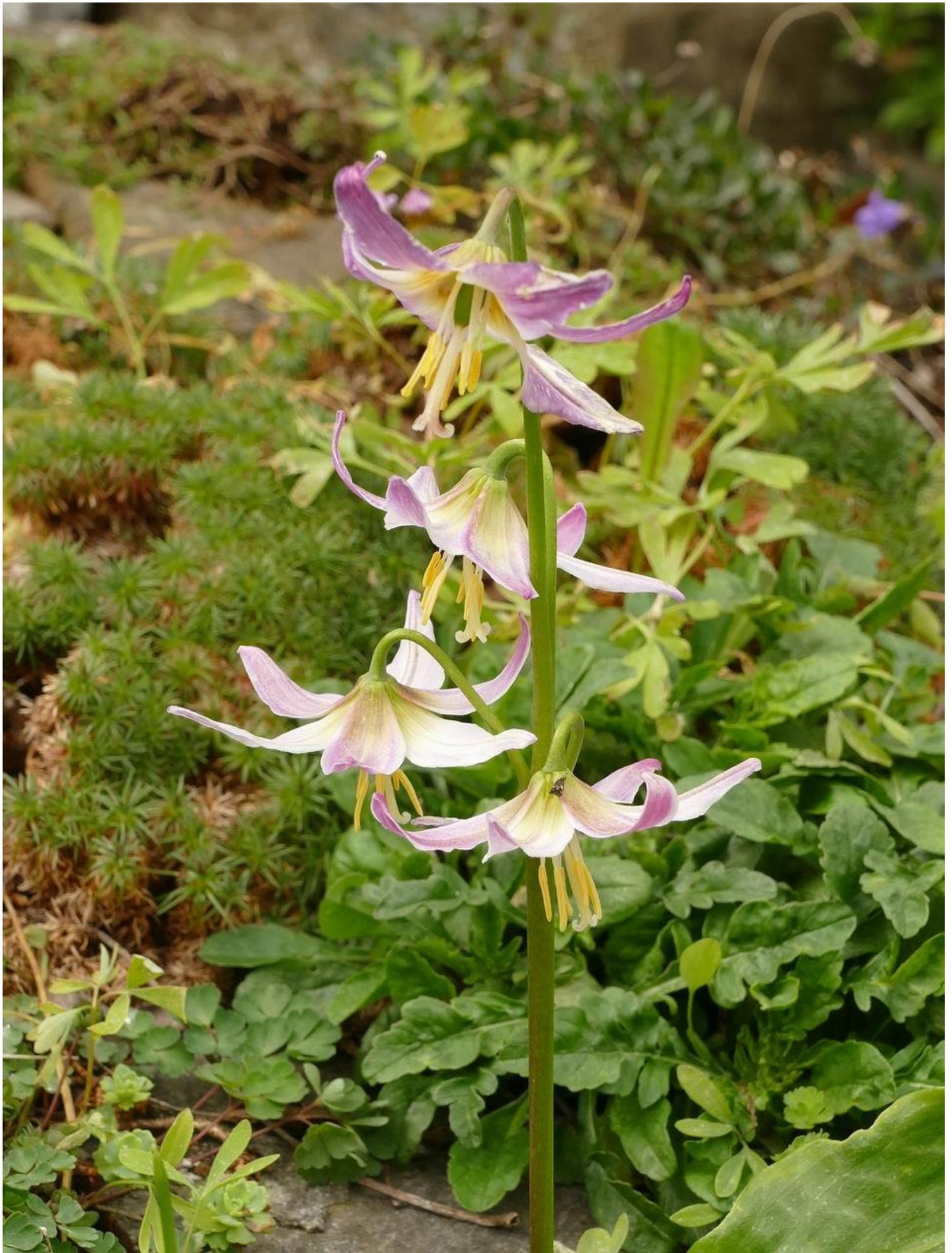


**Erythronium elegans
x revolutum**

This year the stem has four flowers indicating that the bulb is growing strongly but it has shown no willingness to increase by the bulb it is however fertile and sets seed.



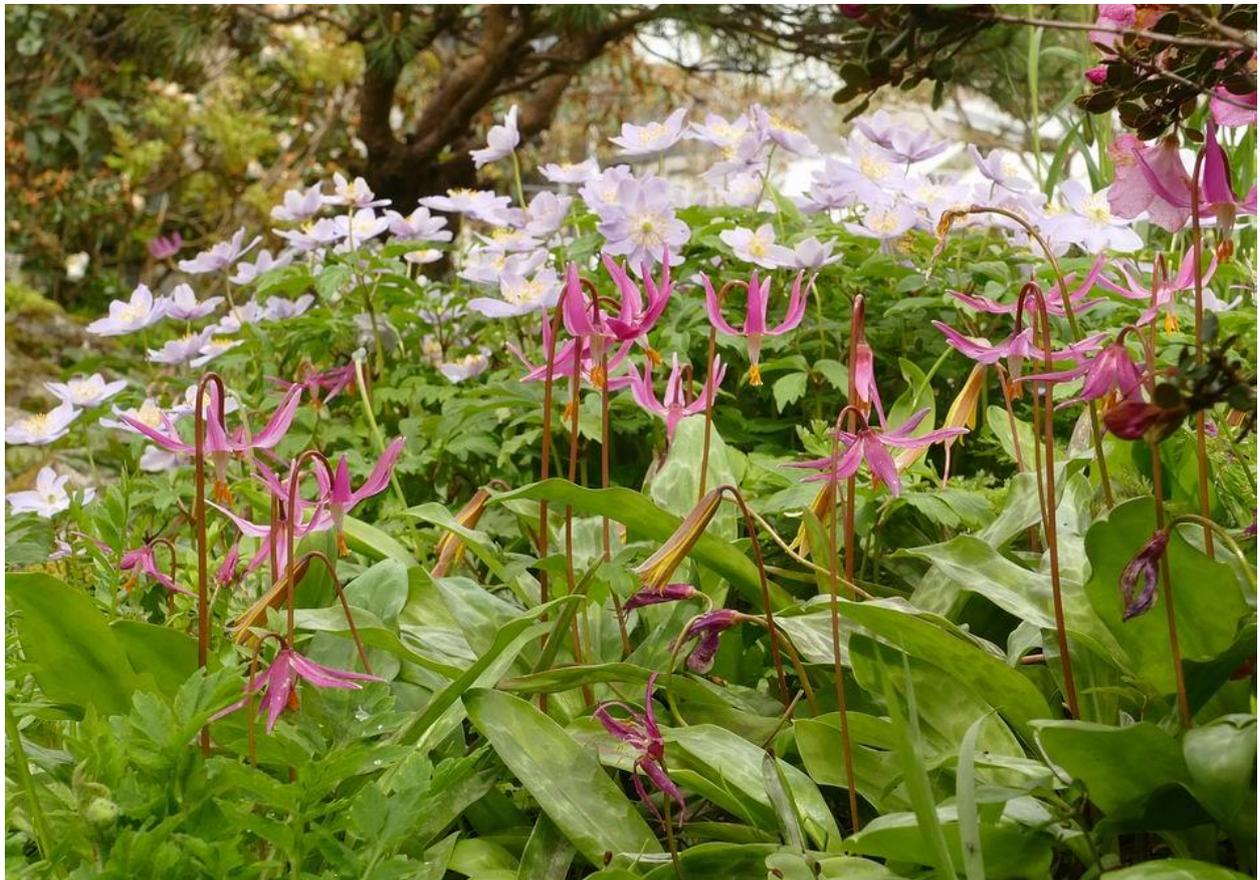
Erythronium howellii



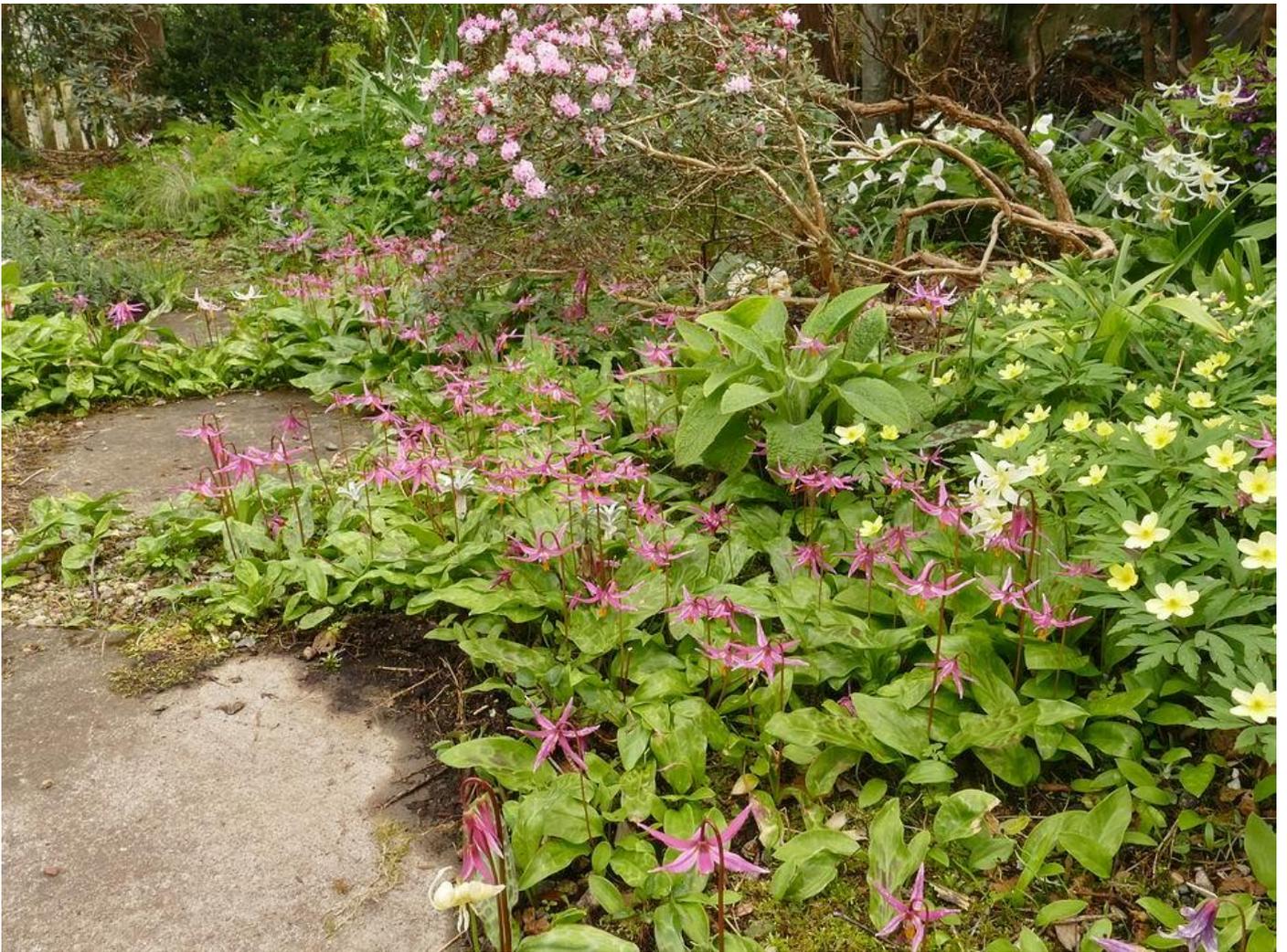
This *Erythronium revolutum* seedling appeared in one of the raised slab beds and perhaps its most attractive feature is that the multiple flowers are well spaced out on the stem.



Hybrids often have increased vigour making them bigger with the ability of clumping up so they stand out and are easy to spot in groups of seedlings.



We have grown this line of **Erythronium revolutum** for a very long time the original seeds came from Vancouver Island and the features that make it distinct in the garden are that it is smaller with a short stem and even the shape of the single dark flower is slightly different from the others as the following pictures show.



***Erythronium revolutum* ex Vancouver Island**



***Erythronium revolutum* ex Vancouver Island**



A few hybrids are occurring but I have no way of confirming if they are from that line or more likely from the many hybrids and larger forms growing on the other side of the path.



Erythronium revolutum and hybrids seeding around in the path leading towards a bright pink *Rhododendron*.



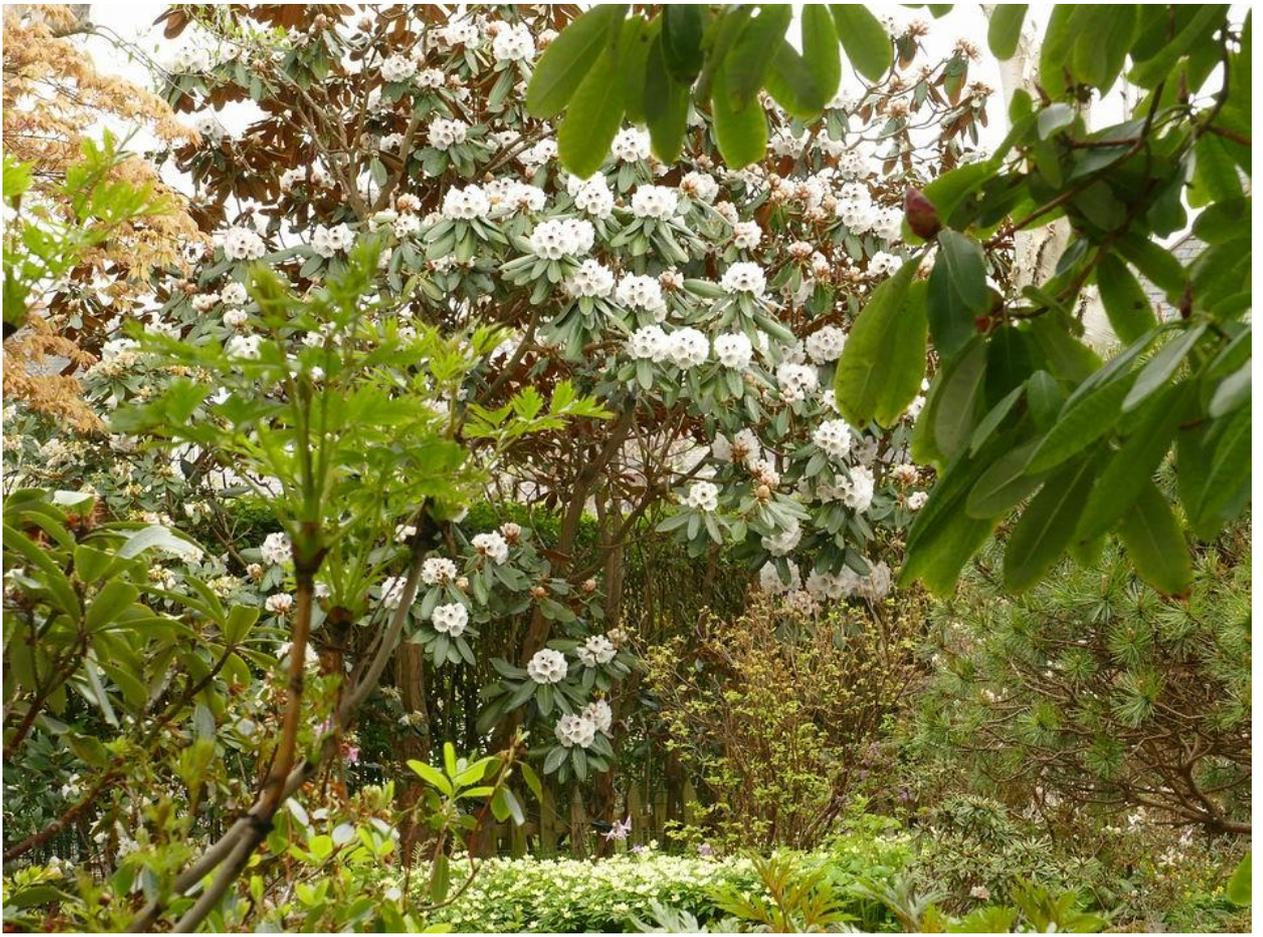
Rhododendron orbiculare has the most intense pink flowers.



Rhododendron orbiculare

**Rhododendron
rex fictolacteum**

Rhododendron rex fictolacteum is one of the largest shrubs in the garden and can be seen from a number of vantage points as you walk round now it is coming into full bloom.



Approaching four metres tall **Rhododendron rex fictolacteum** towers above us.



Rhododendron rex fictolacteum



In [Bulb Log 1220](#) I showed the glorious colours of the Hepatica and Corydalis flowering in this narrow bed: now the Corydalis foliage has collapsed any seed has been shed and I can clear it away.



Most plants die back from the top to the bottom but it seems the corydalis tuber decides that the season is over and parts company from the foliage - as you can see the part of the stems closest to the tuber have withered and stopped supporting the leaves, which then just collapse.



This makes it very easy to simply lift away the yellowing foliage to prevent them rotting and allow the light and air through to the Hepatica leaves.



The bed after the clear up shows the Hepatica leaves and the self seeded Meconopsis that also share this area.



Until now I have left the hepatica to seed themselves but now there are enough seedlings for this area to support, there are even some growing in the moss covering the bits of concrete, so I will watch and gather the seed as it ripens to sow elsewhere in the garden.



I will finish off this week with another before and after picture I appear above to have slipped back into my hippy days letting my hair grow long.



Then one day later I am shorn.....