



BULB LOG 01.....5<sup>th</sup> January 2022



Snowdrops



Happy New Year and welcome to another round of the weekly Bulb Log a project: that I started in January 2003 as a one year trial without ever thinking that I would now be starting into the twentieth year. In fact if I knew that it would become such a long lasting epic I might never have started it in the first place. I have been encouraged to continue for so long because of the loyal readership many of you have been with me since the beginning: thank you all for your support.

I have also been fortunate to have readers who have compiled and made available a Bulb Log Index starting with Len Rhind, from Canada who started it off keeping it going until 2019 when Kelly Jones in USA picked it up for 2020 before **Tristan Hatton-Ellis** from Wales volunteered to take on this valuable task delivering the completed index covering from 2003 to 2021 to me on the first of January- it is now online [Bulb Log Index](#). I find the index invaluable and use it all the time so a huge thanks to Tristan for volunteering to be part of the Bulb Log team. In the last Bulb Log I wrote about our erratic irrational weather through 2021 and that has continued into 2022 with unusually mild winter temperatures reaching 13C in the garden while it was even higher in many parts of the UK. The temperatures recorded make this the warmest winter temperature on record. Plants of course do not follow the

calendar but respond to the prevailing conditions such as temperature and so the early flowering Galanthus shown on the cover, responded to the unseasonal warm conditions by opening their flowers in the hope of attracting a pollinating insect. That was in vain because while they attracted our attention the insects have not been tempted out by the brief mild weather but other forms of garden wild life are around as evidenced by the chewed flowers on the Snowdrops shown on the right. Now I am on the prowl for slugs and snails



although I think it was a slug that had a chew because most snails are currently hiding between rocks, under troughs or on the side of pots which is where I can hunt them down.



Galanthus shoots are appearing and extending by the day suggesting it will not be long before the garden is full of flowers again.



You may remember that in the autumn I featured this Crocus that had planted itself by seed into the crevices between the paving slabs. Now the leaves are emerging showing how congested the growth is however there is nothing I can do other than observe and enjoy nature's creative planting. You can see from the wetness on the slabs that there is a lot of moisture

hanging around in the mild humid air coming in from the west. Damp conditions are not ideal to get the garden tidied and ready for the mass of new growth however I can take advantage of the fine weather and get some work done.



I am always reluctant to cut back the lovely green fronds of the evergreen **Asplenium scolopendrium** ferns that spore around the garden because they are a reminder of the past season and the new one to come so I generally wait until later.



However while tidying away the worst of the leaves I spotted how advanced the *Hepatica* buds that are growing in this narrow bed are. As it emerges I want that new growth and flowers to be seen and to get priority to the light so I removed the fern fronds on that side of the path.



We can enjoy the green from the ferns on the other side of the path and surrounding the bulb bed for a while longer.



**Rock garden bed**

I have done an initial clear up on the rock garden bed by cutting back the old growths and removing the bulk of fallen leaves which will let plants such as Haberlea and Ramonda see some light. As the weather improves I will gradually remove what is left of the leaves along with those that are still falling from the Cotoneaster trees. When it dries out I can do the final clearing of this bed with a leaf blower.



The new bed beside the pond is in a similar state although I did tidy it in the autumn when I mulched it with pine needles before the autumn flowering Crocus flowered although here will be some more clearing to do before the early flowers start to appear. There are also Haberlea and Ramonda growing in the foreground of the bed and troughs that form the edge which link nicely in with those around the rock garden bed further up the garden.



The Ramonda grow very well in crevice style troughs.



For a brief few minutes around 15.30 a pink glow appears in the eastern sky; the light reflected from the sun that has dipped below the horizon casts a spooky glow over the bulb houses where I will go now to see the Narcissus.



The 'U' sand bed is currently the most floriferous and is full of mostly creamy white Narcissus - probably way too many because they etiolate even more when growing in a crowd like this but I enjoy studying the variations in form. There are *Narcissus albidus*, *bulbocodium*, *cantabricus* and *romieuxii* and while some of them are the species the majority are hybrids involving those four species.



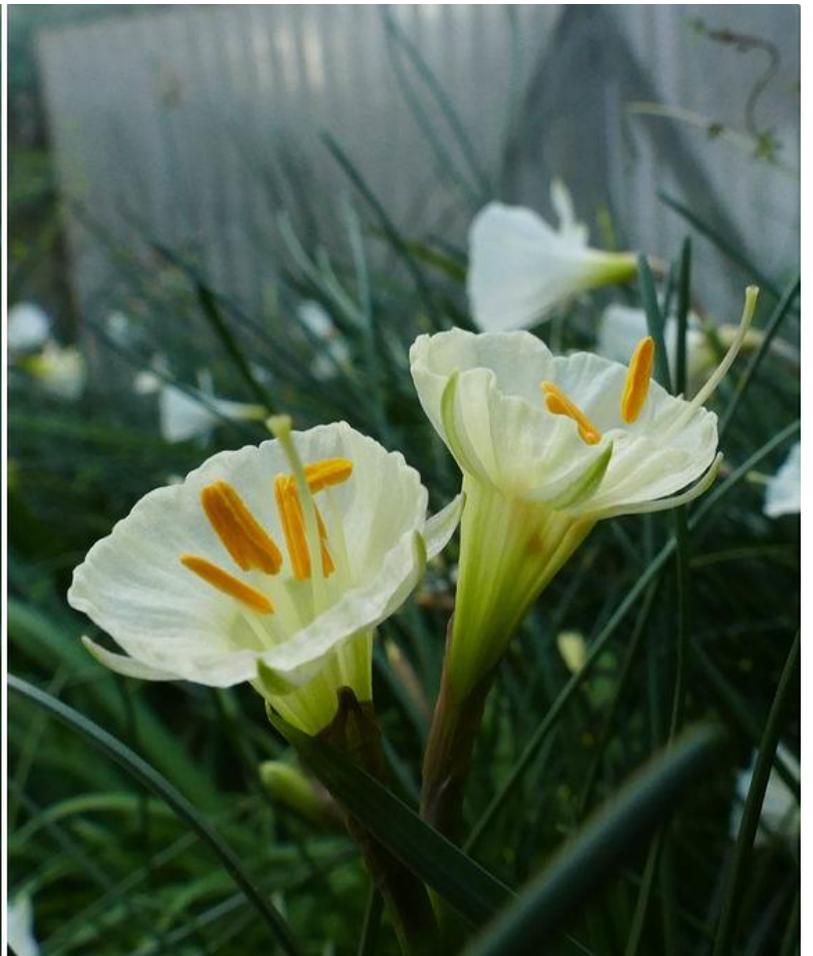


**Mixed Narcissus**





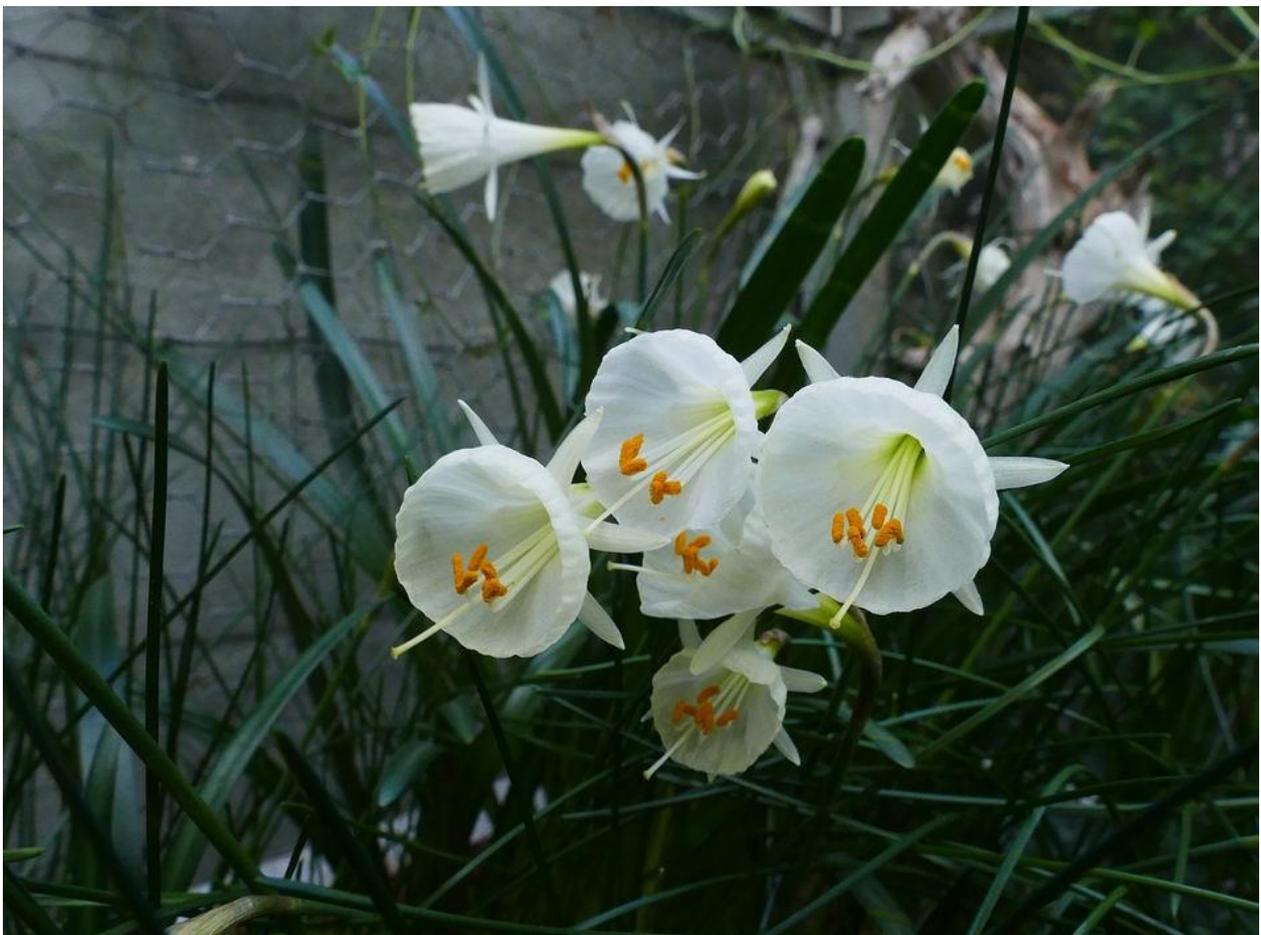
The more yellow in the flower the more likely it is that *Narcissus bulbocodium* is in their parentage.



I like these with their upward pointing flowers and exerted style and stamens.



With the Narcissus growing as close as this it is easy to see why so many of the resulting seedlings are hybrids.



Not all the hybrids are fertile and many do not set seed but that does not mean that their pollen cannot be used to fertilise another more reproductive form. **Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice'** has never set seed for me and the flowers last for a long time which suggest to me that it may not be able to carry seed but I have been transferring its pollen to other forms to see if they will set seed that may inherit the distinctive shape but with a different colour.



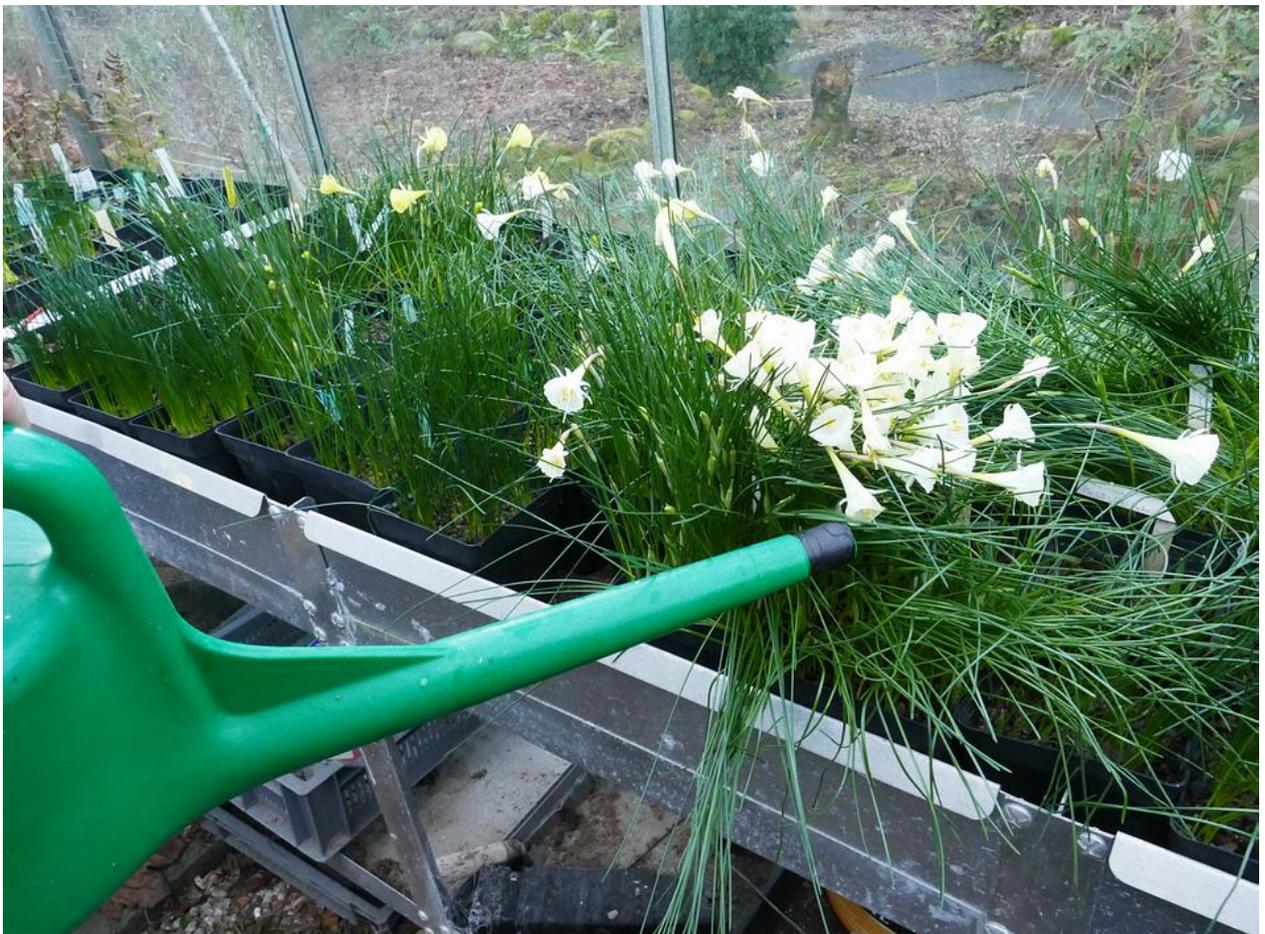
Judging by some chewed flowers I think that I have some slugs to search out and deal with. It was interesting to see the bud of one flower poke through and try and open in a hole chewed in a neighbouring flower.



The Narcissus growing in pots are slower into flower so the mass flowering has still to come in this bulb house but every day more are opening, especially in the mild conditions, so there is much to look forward to.



The poor light causes the leaves and stems to grow excessively but when I see them flopping around like above it suggests to me that although the compost is still moist they need some more water.



With the exception of a few pots, I have not watered them since I turned off the outside water in November. If you observe them carefully the plants will always indicate when they need some extra water and the milder conditions stimulates more active growth which means that those showing the most green could do with some more water.



**Narcissus bulbocodium**



**Narcissus bulbocodium**



**Narcissus bulbocodium**



**Narcissus 'Shiraume'**



**Narcissus bulbocodium**



**Narcissus romieuxii**



**Narcissus bulbocodium**



There are even less flowers in the third bulb house at the moment partly because I planted a different range of bulbs with fewer Narcissus but there are plenty of flowers and variations to come in the months ahead.



A few of those in flower are this *Narcissus* hybrid and the *Crocus laevigatus* below.



*Crocus laevigatus*



I started out writing about our erratic weather and just to show how quickly it can change, in the few days I have been working on this Bulb Log, the wind increased and came from the North bringing with it cold air showing that we are not free from the cold breath of winter yet: it is never far away and we can experience freezing conditions until at least the end of May.



I will leave you with the view this morning of a light dusting of snow accompanied by freezing winds.....