



BULB LOG.....20-02-2003



Fritillaria chitralensis

Check back the picture of *Fritillaria chitralensis* in Bulb Log 6 and you will see what I mean about the plants needing plenty of water and food at this time of rapid growth.

It is incredible how quickly they grow even though we have been going through a cold period, with temperatures not climbing above 5C, and the east wind giving a chill factor of minus several degrees. With all this new growth emerging both under glass and in the seed frames it is very important to spray with insecticide regularly, I found two green flies on the Frit seedlings today.

I thought that I would show you the leaves of *Frit davidii* which we grow in the bulb frame.

Fritillaria davidii

These are the most unusual of all the Frit leaves and they emerge in August, you have to be very careful that you do not mistake them for one of those dreadful popper weeds and pull them out. The bulb starts making new roots in June so it needs to be kept moist at all times. It is a beautiful recently introduced Chinese species which has large yellowish flowers on very short stems and it has a strange scent which reminds me of guavas.





Fritillaria thunbergia

Another of the Chinese frits of which there have been forms in cultivation for a very long time is *Frit thunbergii*. This is one of the newly introduced forms which I think is a much better free flowering plant. Its emerging spikes poke straight upwards and I am interested to compare it with *Frit tortifolia* spikes which perform a sort of spiraling dance as they extend.

Fritillaria tortifolia

I find frits so fascinating that I can spend hours just looking at their stems pushing through the gravel, (is this sad or what ?and I make fun of galanthophiles!).



Fritillaria sewerzowii

Look at these great fat buds like exploding green eggs which are *Fritillaria sewerzowii* shoots.

Fritillaria stenanthera

While I am on the far eastern frits this is *Fritillaria stenanthera* which will be in flower soon.

This is a pot full of seed raised bulbs and it shows how we have to cram them into small pots, because of lack of greenhouse space, but this is what the bulbs enjoy they flower and increase every year.

Another method we employ now, also due to space restrictions, is sowing seed into the same pot as the parent bulb when the pot is not too crammed and we only have a small quantity of seed.





Fritillaria montana with seedlings

You will also see from the label that we got this bulb as “*F. ruthenica*” but when it flowered it turned out to be *Fritillaria montana*. It is important to try and verify your plants when they flower as many bulbs get spread around under the wrong name, and the best of us are guilty of doing it at some time.



Fritillaria alburyana pot

Fritillaria alburyana is a snow melt species that has a habit of trying to open its flowers even before they come through the ground. We grow two groups of this species the more recent one came to us via Dutch bulb growers in Holland where I have seen pictures of hundreds of them growing in a sandy field. This group are a bit easier to flower well and all we do to encourage them to extend their stem, before they open, is to put a plastic pot with its bottom cut off over the emerging shoots, like forcing rhubarb.



The other group which is more difficult to grow we got from Harold Esslemont 15 years ago. It came from an earlier introduction and this we keep in the fridge until the shoots are well extended then we move it into the kitchen window sill for some heat, this is as near as we can get to the snow melt conditions of its habitat.

Fritillaria alburyana in fridge

We now have seedlings which are a cross between the two groups.