



BULB LOG..... 27-06-2003

Here we are at log 26, half way through the year and things are getting busier. I had worried at one stage what I would have to show and tell you as the year progressed, but the opposite is the case, as now I have to decide what I can leave out.



Corydalis x Craigton Blue

I first showed you Corydalis x Craigton Blue in Log 22 and this is it still flowering in the garden today. What I think makes this plant special is the way it produces flowering stems from the leaf axils all the way down the stem, this greatly extends its flowering period.



Frit stem and pod

I have been collecting the frit seed for a while now and I usually cut the stem as it starts to go yellow at the base like the one on the right hand side but it is perfectly fine to take them off when they are slightly green like the one on the left and still get good seed.



Frit seed storage.

The pods, with some stem still attached, are put into carefully labelled paper bags and these are then stored on a shelf in the potting shed, away from direct light where they can dry off. Frit seed can be stored in this way for two or three years and still be viable provided it does not get damp. I am often asked about sowing bulb seed immediately it is ripe and some people do recommend this as the best way, 'as it is in nature' they would say, but, that is only half of the story. In the natural habitat of these Mediterranean type bulbs, yes, the seed is sown as soon as it is ripe, but, it is into a hot dry Mediterranean summer not at all like a Scottish summer which is more often cool and wet. In our conditions seed sown now is susceptible to fungal attack through the summer months and this is especially so for the thin papery type of seed produced by *Fritillaria*. If you do sow it now keep the seed pots under glass so the seed remains dry until the early Autumn.



Narcissus pots

We do not get very hot temperatures in Aberdeen even in summer and as the *Narcissus* of the *romieuxii* kind do not flower well unless they get a wee bit of warmth (32C) for a few days I always lift their pots out of the plunge and lay them back inclined at an angle so their sides are exposed to the south and the sun. Since I have been doing this the *romieuxii* types have flowered much better.



Narcissus bulbs

I hope that you can see the bulge in the sides of this pot; they should be straight but they have been pushed out by the expanding bulbs. Maggi often finds me lifting the plastic pots with bulbs in and caressing their sides to feel how the growth in side is progressing, it is very satisfying to feel a nice bulge in a pot of seedling bulbs, this is a pleasure denied to you if you only grow in clay pots!

When repotting narcissus it is important to get them at the correct depth; *N. rupicola* and *romieuxii* like to be approximately half way down the pot but most others and especially the *bulbocodium* and *jonquilla* types like to be as deep as the pot will allow



Narcissus bulb depth

You can see how far down the pot these Narcissus wilkommii were planted, if you plant them too shallow they will not flower.



Narcissus bulbs number

Also, they like company so you can plant as many as you can squeeze into the pot and they will grow very happily.

This is also the time that we chit some of our Narcissus bulbs, this is a way to speed up the increase of the ones that refuse to split naturally.



Bulb chitting

Start by cutting off the top of the bulb, with a sharp knife, so you have a flat area (top left), then lay the bulb upside down on this flat cut and cut it in half (top right) then continue to cut the bulb into ever smaller sections always making sure that each section has a part of the basal plate, which is the brown bit at the base of the bulb where the scales all join. You can now separate each small segment into two or three scales (twin scaling) and carefully cut them apart so each has a part of the basal plate, finally dust them with some sulphur.



In the bag.

Now you need to put the pieces into a labelled plastic bag with some just-moist vermiculite seal it up and put it in a warm dark place for about six weeks.

If you have never tried this, start on a narcissus that you have lots of to build up your confidence. I will show you the results in a future log.



Lilium szovitsianum: A nice lily to sign off on.