



BULB LOG 46.....17<sup>th</sup> November 2021



Fungi



With more Narcissus flowers appearing in the bulb house it was my intention to move on from focusing on trees, leaves and fungi this week, but they are such a beautiful feature of autumn that I cannot walk past them. I took the front cover picture of fungi growing on a tree stump right beside the road on my daily walk and you will also see a line of them heading diagonally towards the bottom left corner presumably following a root. All trees will have symbiotic relationships with underground fungi where the fungi can draw sugar compounds such as sugars

from the tree and in return the mycelium breaks down organic matter, such as the annual mulch of leaves, releasing micronutrients essential for the healthy growth of trees and plants.



At the base of a giant tree I discover another lovely crop of fungi which along with the moss growing on the bark have created a habitat into which other plants are seeding further illustrating how in nature plants grow in communities not in isolation.



The fungi growing in the garden that I featured on the cover of Bulb Log 4321 are expanded to their full size, having shed their spores and are now falling over.



In the back garden a group of fungi are obviously growing along the path of a tree root confirming the increasingly natural direction we are taking the garden in blurring the line between wild and cultivated.



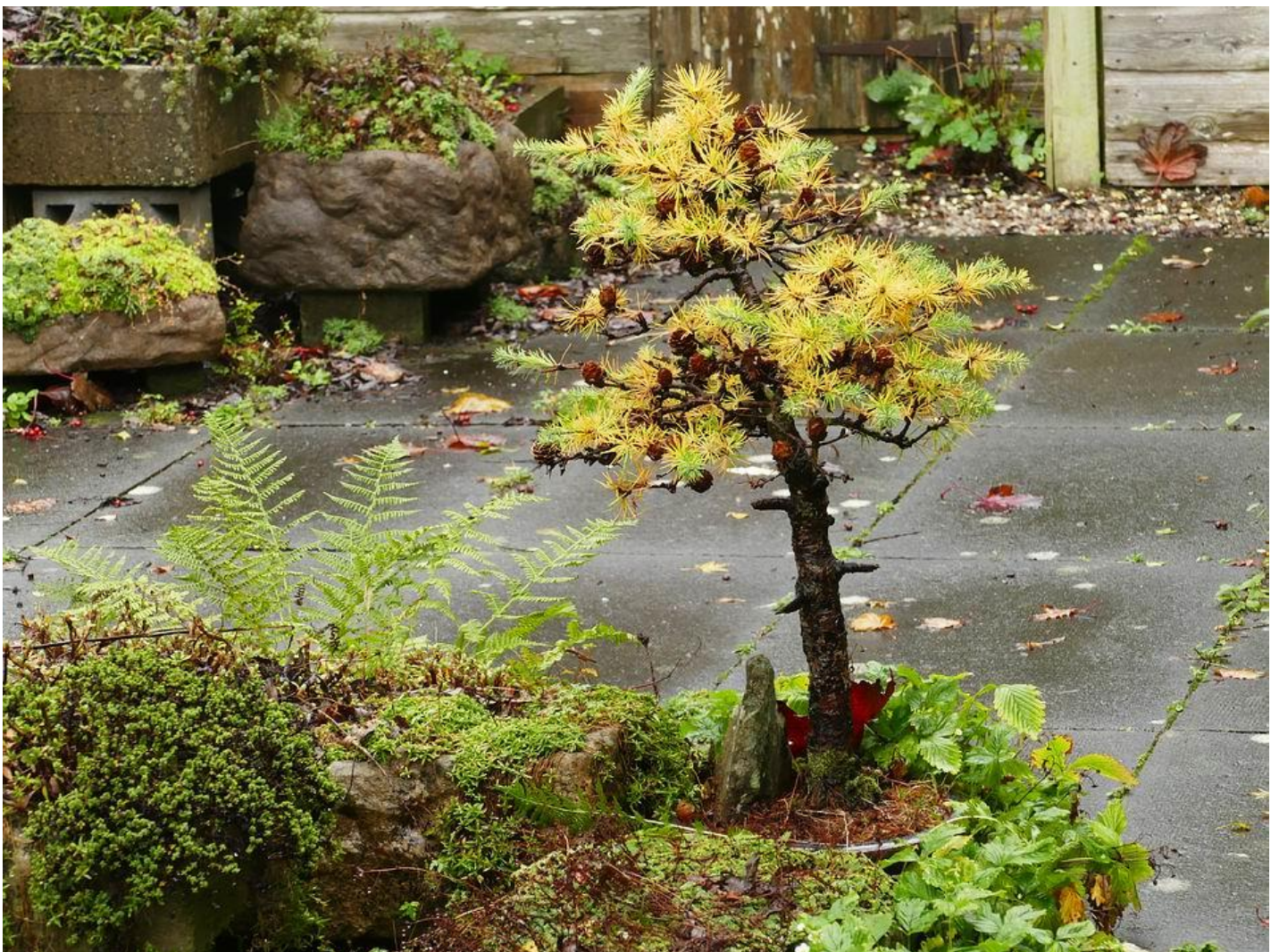
The size of our garden restricts us from growing giant trees such as these but it does not mean we cannot grow any.



This copper coloured beech tree has been grown in the container for over thirty years and every year it gets clipped back to keep it in scale. When the leaves first emerge they are a lovely deep red turning yellow then copper brown in the autumn.



Like on a beech hedge these leaves will be retained throughout the winter only to be shed in the spring when the new ones emerge from the buds.



A pot grown larch tree of similar vintage means we can enjoy the colours of this deciduous conifer as well as the fine crop of cones it produces every year.

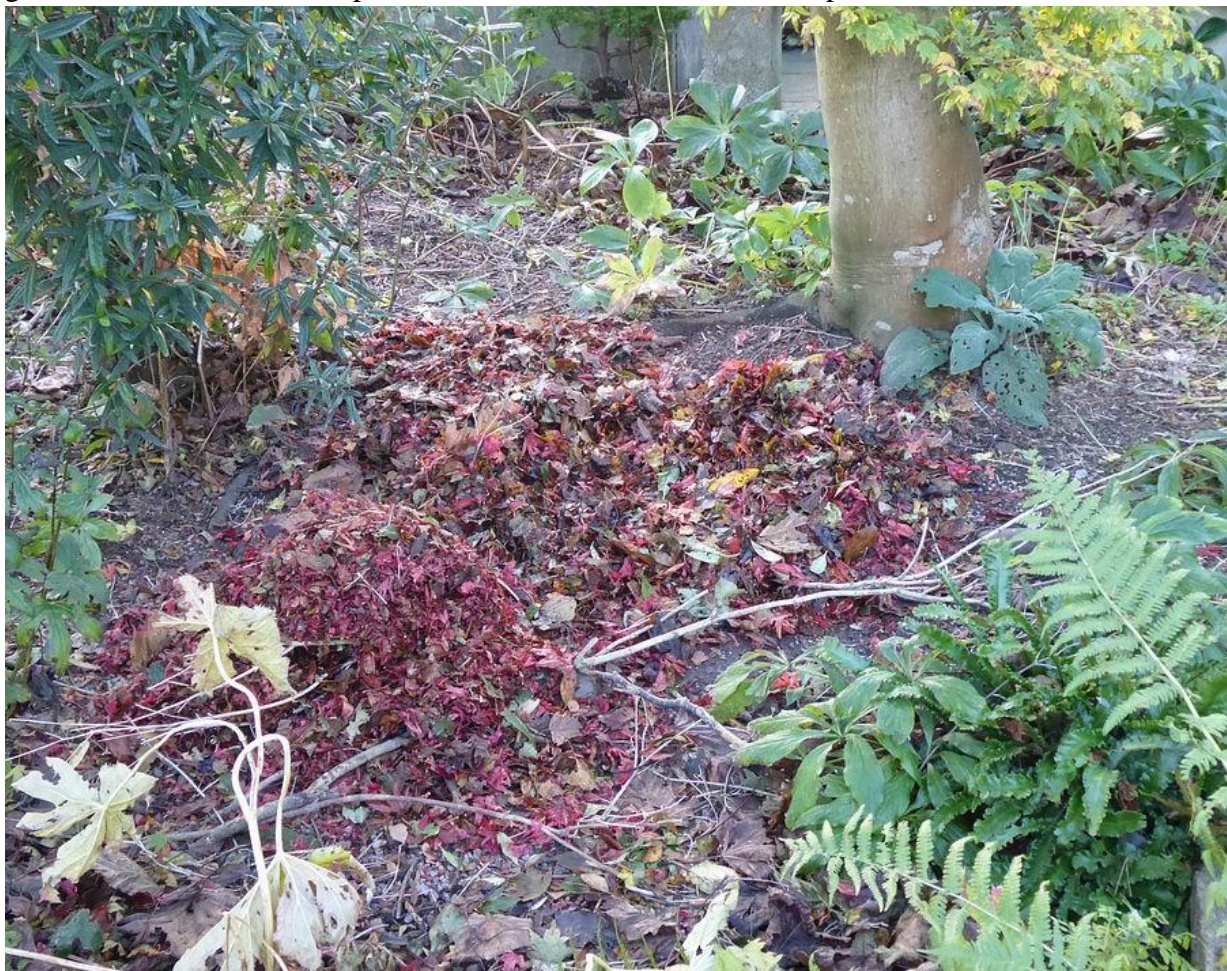
I celebrate the shapes, textures and colours of some leaves in the next two pages.







For a short while the colourful leaves look good, carpeting the ground with colour, before they start to turn brown, get wet and then become a problem, so I have started the clear up.



Provided the leaves are dry it is relatively easy to blow or suck them up using our 'leafvac' which also shreds them down a bit before depositing them in a bag. When the bag is full I can either take them to the compost heaps or spread them immediately as a mulch, as I am doing here. This is the spot under the bird feeders where I have the problem of some pesky pigeons that were tramping and

eroding the soil so as part of the solution I am going to spread a thick mulch to both protect and enhance the soil.



As I gather the old fallen leaves I find some newly emerged fresh green leaves on some self-sown Narcissus bulbocodium which reminds me of a question I was asked after a recent Zoom talk I gave about how to go about getting plants to self-seed. Although the answer sounds simple, there is more to it than just leaving the plants to set then shed their seed.



First you have to ensure that the parent plants are fertile and able to set seed. Some of the cultivar bulbs you buy may be sterile so I always recommend that you start out by raising your bulbs from seed in the first place then. by planting out a group of seedlings. you will get a better seed set than you would if you only have a single clone. The next thing

to consider is where the seed is falling and I am reminded of the well-known Biblical quote from Matthew ‘Some seed fell on the stony ground’ suggests that it will not thrive when in reality we get the best results when the seed falls onto the gravel areas like these Narcissus bulbocodium. The parable goes on to state ‘Some seed fell among the weeds’ and in that case it is wise to ensure that there is not too much competition from more vigorous plants that could shade out the light from the germinating seeds.



The next bit of advice is to be patient because it will take time for a seeding population to build but given the right conditions you will in time get results. I recently removed a sprawling *Celmisia* from the area shown above and now there are masses of *Erythronium* seedlings from the thinnest first seed leaf all the way through to flowering size which with *Erythronium* can be as quick as three years but more realistically it takes five.

It is not too obvious to state that to achieve self-seeding colonies you have to be prepared to leave the plants until all the seed is shed such as this spreading population of *Allium wallichii* the seed of which, like all plants, germinates best when it falls onto a gravel covered surface.





**Allium wallichii**



Perhaps the best example of planting by seed is in our front drives where we only scattered seed into the gravel section then left the plants to seed themselves. This is how the drive looks just now before the winter clear up if you would like to see the sequence through a year check out the [Driveway Special Bulb Log 5117](#).

**Cyclamen  
hederifolium**

Sometimes we do help to distribute the seed around the garden especially with this *Cyclamen hederifolium* where if you look where I have parted the foliage the seed is germinating where it fell right on top of the parent corm.



At this stage I can carefully lift the tiny seedlings replanting them around the garden where they can grow.



I have started to tidy away the old growth and leaves from this bed where many of the earliest flowering plants grow it will then get mulched during the winter.



As I tidy I find some Galanthus shoots already poking through the ground in readiness for the new season.



The flowers and leaves of **Crocus laevigatus** rise through the season's debris and their leaves along with those of the Cyclamen will persist all through the winter and spring before they eventually die back later in the summer.



These Roscoea leaves however do the opposite of the Crocus and Cyclamen, because they only appeared above ground in August around the time the cyclamen lost its leaves, and now after a relatively short season they are retreating into hibernation for around nine months.



Now most of the growth has died back some of the hardy New Zealand evergreen subjects come into their own in the rock garden bed such as the small ***Aciphylla similis***.



***Helichrysum coralloides***



Another great plant for winter foliage is **Rhododendron makinoi** the new leaves are covered in a silver indumentum which will gradually wear away to reveal the dark green.



Coming back for the last three pictures to the autumn coloured leaves that a few of our trees are still clinging on to.





With the exception of the **Acer 'Osakazuki'** above, we raised them from seed.



I was tempted to share some of the many Narcissus flowers that are now opening in the bulb house but their season is just starting while it is coming to the end of this colourful cycle for the trees so I will leave you with the trail that Narcissus will feature in next week's Bulb Log.....