



BULB LOG 49.....8th December 2021



Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice'



While Storm Arwen and the worst of the winds have passed, the weather continues to swing between snow and rain. One day we wake up to a covering of the white stuff then the next it is dark and rainy - the only consistent seems to be the days are getting shorter and darker with just the occasional brief glimpse of the sun as it rises or sets and that is winter.

Just as one storm passes I hear that Storm Barra is heading our way, arriving on Tuesday but as it is coming in from the Atlantic it should not hit the East coast so

hard. I leave this frame open most of the time and like to see the pots covered in snow – it would be good if they were covered in snow through until February however our seasons are not that clearly defined.



There is quite a lot of foliage growth in this sand bed but only a few flowers so far however I can take pleasure in looking for the signs of a new shoot with flower buds pushing through the sand.



In contrast there are masses of Narcissus flowers already open in the 'U' shaped sand bed. I find it fascinating that even the same clone will flower at different times in the different beds. Those planted in sand beds generally flower before the same clone of bulb would, when growing in a pot.



It may seem easy to identify a Narcissus when there is a label in the pot to refer to but not so when they are all mixed up and growing in a bunch like here. I love spending time looking carefully at each flower and observing that while many look superficially similar, if you study the details you will detect there are subtle differences.



Growing them like this does emphasise to me the importance that I should only be selecting to name the ones that look sufficiently different that they clearly stand out from the crowd.

**Narcissus
'Craigton
Chalice'**

I told the story of how I accidentally planted my pot of Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice' out into the sand beds where I can easily spot its distinctively cup shaped flowers which clearly stands out from the others.



Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice'



Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice'



Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister'



I have revised and given my talk Nature, Gardener's Tutor via Zoom a few times recently and thought I would share some observations where I compare wild plants with our attempts to recreate that habitat in the garden. One is **Saxifraga oppositifolia** (above) growing in Arctic Norway with a Saxifraga cultivar in the garden shown below.



I find the difference so obvious now but in the beginning I suffered from gardener's blindness. When looking at the wild example I accepted the mosses and other plants as part of nature but in our early days we were not so willing to accept them in the garden.



Then as my taste and understanding matured I accepted that it was essential to accept mosses and such like growing in the garden if I was going to achieve my goal of imitating parts of nature in the garden.



The tidy gardener would want to remove the moss and liverwort however I understand it is an important part of the ecosystem.

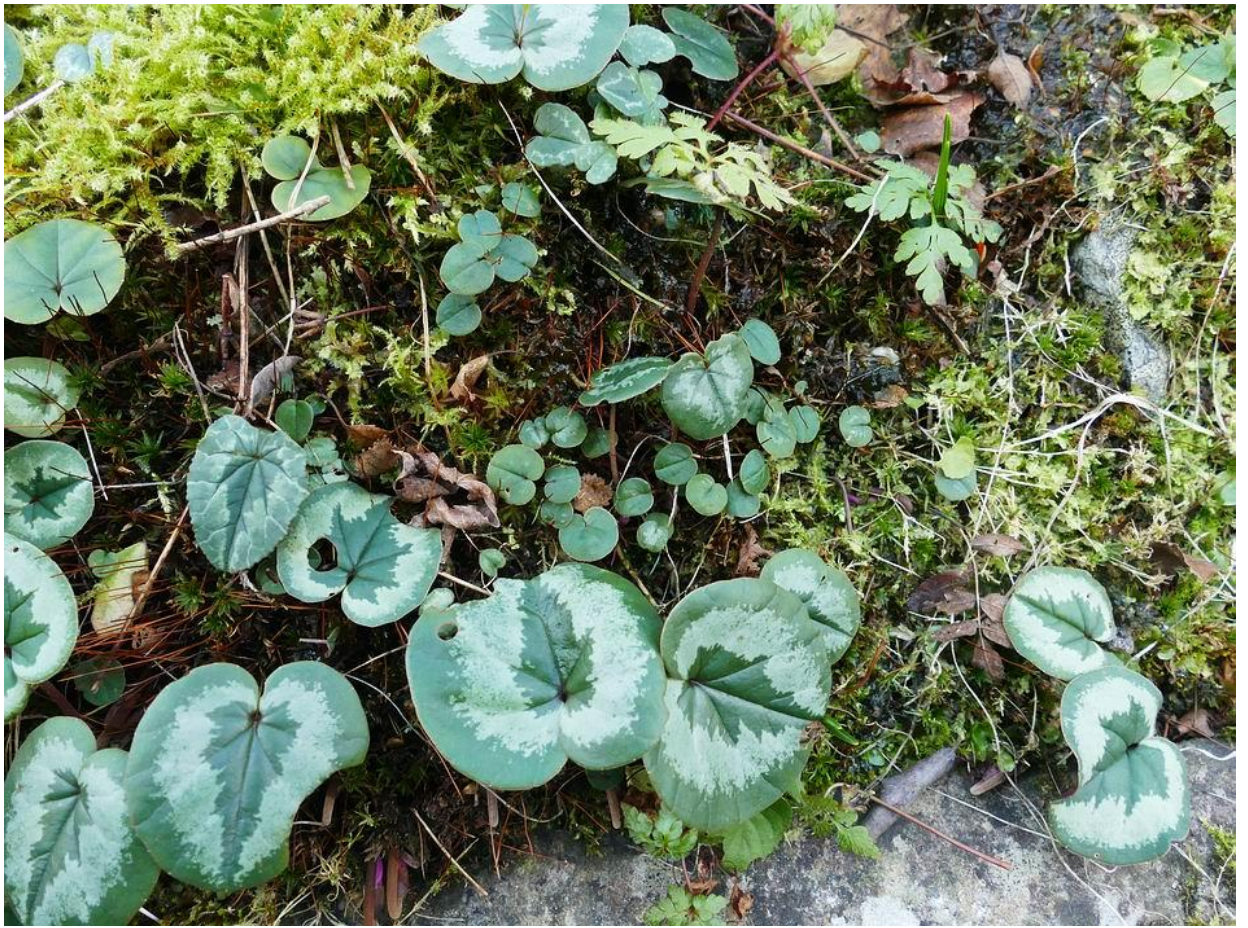


Plants in habitat complete with rocks and mosses.



Accepting moss in some situations has benefited plants such as **Cyclamen coum** which is growing and seeding vigorously among the moss covered sand bed while it has struggled to survive in other parts of the garden.

The damp moss forms a great habitat for seedlings such as clusters of **Cyclamen coum** seedlings growing where they fell when the seed capsule disintegrated.



In our moist climate moss is especially attracted to growing on the broken concrete that we use and one day I must learn to identify the many different species that grow in our garden.



Sometimes we have to make the decision if we should allow the moss to grow. This is the cobble bed where, if left to its own devices, the moss would very soon cover the stone completely and in time a soil would form changing the habitat completely so here I will remove it from the stones. It is interesting how the moss favours certain types of stone over others.



Because I want them to remain a rock feature I will also remove the moss from the stones in the centre of this bed but I may be selective and leave it to grow on some of the edging stones.



Other decisions have to be made about the growth of moss that is now completely covering the sandstone trough that forms a corner of the bed. Should it go or should it stay?

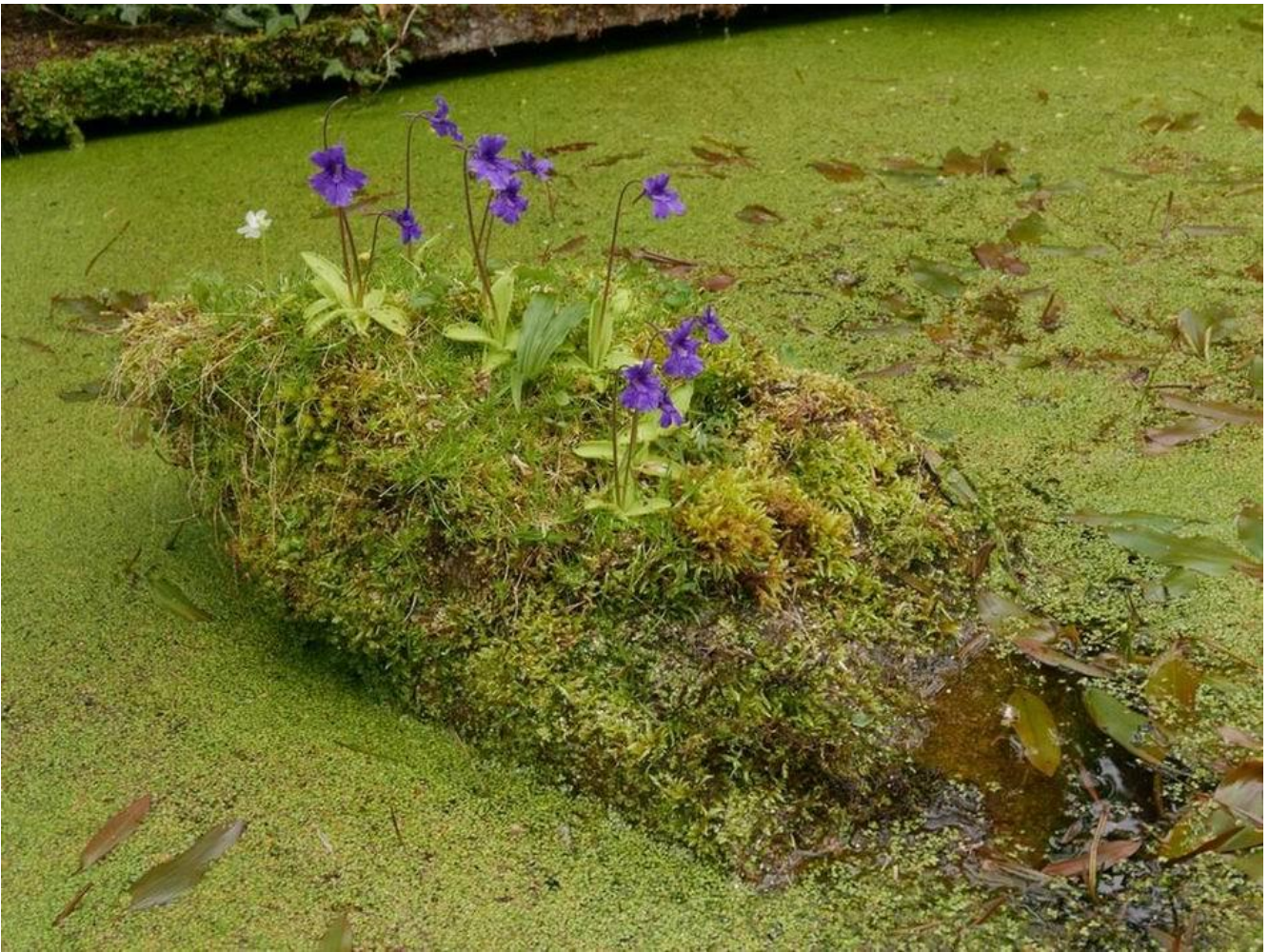


The moss also grows on the slabs surrounding the pond and I remove it most years but I have been wondering about leaving some slabs covered to see what plants arrive and maybe even try scattering some seed on it.



This is what happens in the wild where moss is the first pioneer to grow on a rock which in turn creates a habitat that other plants can grow in, so that given time the rock would be completely covered appearing as just a vegetative lump in the landscape.





Here is another of our habitat experiments where we allowed the moss to grow on this semi submerged rock then sowed some ***Pinguicola grandiflora*** seeds.



The habitat has continued to evolve as other plants have made their own way onto the rock.



This newly created bed looked very raw and artificial with the freshly broken concrete but we knew the moss would soon grow to cover the rock forming a receptive habitat for the *Corydalis* and *Hepatica* to seed into.



The bed looks much more natural after two years of growth.



It wasn't just the Hepatica and Corydalis that we originally planted seeding around, other plants such as Meconopsis have also seeded in.



Nature's process in action as the Hepatica stems heavy with seed flop to deposit their contents among the moss covered concrete, where the small leaves of young plants from previous years can be seen growing.



Moss creates a great habitat and growing medium but also blends in very well with a wide range of plants.



I will leave you this week with a picture taken earlier this year showing the *Trillium rivale* seeding down the wall with a group of seed leaves, deposited by previous year's flowers, growing in the moss, pine needles and other detritus that has gathered below the bottom flowers and the message that working with mother nature can give better results than working against her.....