



BULB LOG 42.....19th October 2022



Crocus banaticus



Since ancient times anyone who cultivates plants becomes aware of the growing seasons. You can read of the meteorological winter, which is based on the annual temperature cycle, while the astronomical winter is based on the position of earth in relation to the sun. We know that the Earth orbits the Sun and our distant ancestors recognised and built great monuments marking the points of the year when the sun was highest or lowest in the sky. From the moment gardeners start growing they learn how the growth of plants responds to conditions, light, temperature and moisture, not to the date on the calendar.

Dates however are useful as a reminder of when to carry out certain tasks. The autumn flowering bulbs are triggered by a temperature gradient and it is because we get colder earlier in the north that our crocus start to flower before those growing in the warmer south – then in the spring it is the other way round as it takes longer for our temperatures to warm enough to trigger the early flowering bulbs. The autumn crocus are often referred to as late flowering with the spring ones being the early ones and relative to the calendar year that is the case however relative to their growth cycle it is those that flower in the spring that are late. Crocus corms are replaced annually with a new corm, complete with flower bud, forming on top of the old corm so relative to the growth cycle of these plants it is the autumn flowering species that flower early while the spring flowers are later, waiting until after the winter before they appear.



Here in the north we are coming to the end of the autumn flowering crocus season in the open garden where amazingly, despite the stormy weather, the distinctive flowers of **Crocus banaticus** are still calling out for our attention.



I consider ourselves fortunate that **Crocus banaticus** grows so well in our garden where it seeds around. Through the years we have tried and lost many plants that cannot tolerate our growing conditions and this experience has gradually lead us to follow the natural process of allowing the plants to choose us. Every subsequent generation of garden seedlings will shift further towards your gardens weather and growing conditions. While we grow most **Crocus banaticus** in the garden there are a few like this one, raised from wild seed, which we grow in a sand bed.



People in warmer areas may look on in envy at how well some of our plants grow in the cool moist conditions of our garden but that envy is reciprocated as we look back in envy at plants, such as **Sternbergia sicula**, thriving and flowering so freely in their warm dry soils.

There are many plants that we have learned to enjoy in other people's gardens. There are ways we can modify our growing conditions such as under glass where we do get a

few flowers on the Sternbergia. I have also found they do better in the sand beds than they did in pots.



Sternbergia sicula



Sternbergia sicula



Sternbergia lutea



Sternbergia sicula

As per my usual routine I watered the sand beds and pots in the glass houses at the beginning of September then again in early October but the two storms are just a guide and due to the warmer than average temperatures I had to add additional water in between the two.



Sternbergia sicula* and *Crocus pulchellus



Some bulbs such as these **Crocus pulchellus** and its hybrids grow perfectly well in the garden but I keep a few in the sand beds where the flowers and gardeners can be protected from any bad weather.



Interesting to note that due to the warmer drier conditions under glass the exact same clones flower a bit later in the sand beds than they do in the garden.



Sand Beds

There is a lot of growth appearing across the sand beds since they were watered in September.





Many of the bulbs growing in pots are also coming into leaf.



In the foreground of the cobbled bed you see **Crocus kotschyanus** and **Crocus salzmannii** with others behind.



Crocus ligusticus with white hybrids of *Crocus speciosus*.



A few years ago I dropped some seed of *Crocus kotschyanus leucopharynx* onto the cobble bed - now it flowers.



Regular readers will remember that this started out as a sand bed but the mice found it too easy to dig the sand to eat the corms leading me to the successful solution of paving over the sand with small closely placed stones which would prevent the mice from digging while still allowing the bulbs to grow up and flower through the gaps.



With the crocus flowers coming to an end for this season I will share the pictures I took on my garden walk.



This plant often goes under the name of **Crocus pulchellus 'Zephyr'** but because of the shape and size of its flowers I am more inclined to believe it is a hybrid which has some *Crocus speciosus* in its parentage. It increases well both vegetatively and by seed.



Crocus speciosus



While it seems like the autumn Crocus flowering season is a short one, this self-sown hybrid has delivered a succession of flowers for over four weeks already.



This group of **Crocus banaticus** are flowering among some collapsing foliage displaying the colours of autumn.



Crocus and Cyclamen grow well together: here the crocus flowers appear above the leaves of Cyclamen coum.





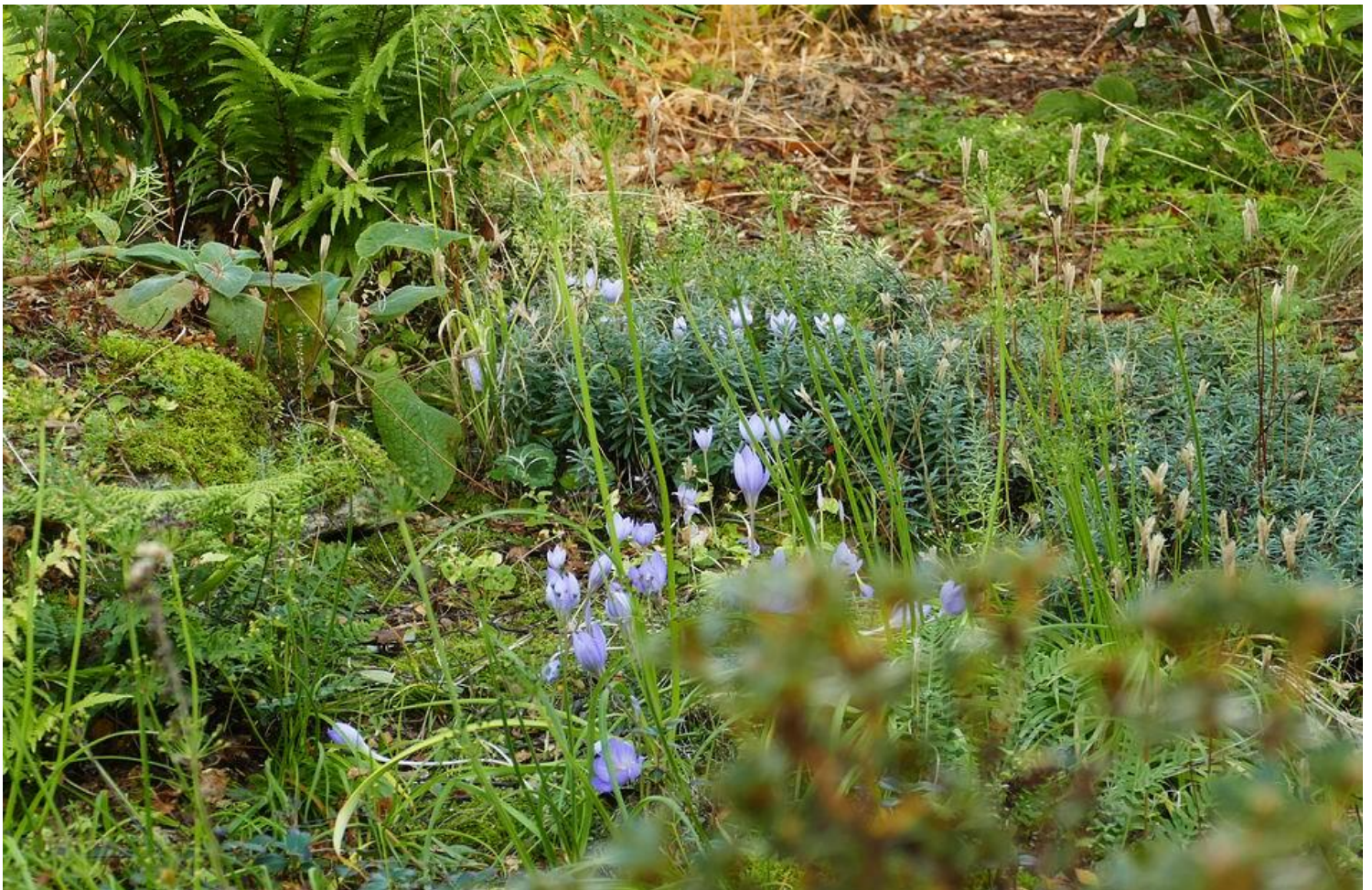
The main flowering of these white forms of **Cyclamen hederifolium** has passed but the beautiful leaves will be with us all through the winter and spring until they eventually die back some time next summer.



Two different clones of the silver leaved forms of **Cyclamen hederifolium**.



Looking down across this part of the garden I see more crocus flowers that I need to get closer to see.



They are mostly **Crocus pulchellus** and **Crocus speciosus**.



Crocus pulchellus seeds around through the **Celmisia walkeri**.



Crocus speciosus



The cloud pruned **Chamaecyparis obtusa 'Nana Gracilis'** gets a good clipping once a year around this time.

Above it is pictured after I had finished the clipping with its crisp evergreen clouds contrasting well against the bright orange and reds of the Acers.

The plants growing in the small gravel area around our front doorstep give a good indication of the planting style we adopt across the garden which is to scatter seeds then leave the plants to spread themselves so we get Cyclamen and Hepatica growing here with other plants that many may classify as weedy but we are willing to welcome and enjoy them for their easy beauty.



I will round off this week with the reverse view looking out from the front door towards the front garden.....