



Bulb Log Diary

Pictures and text © Ian Young

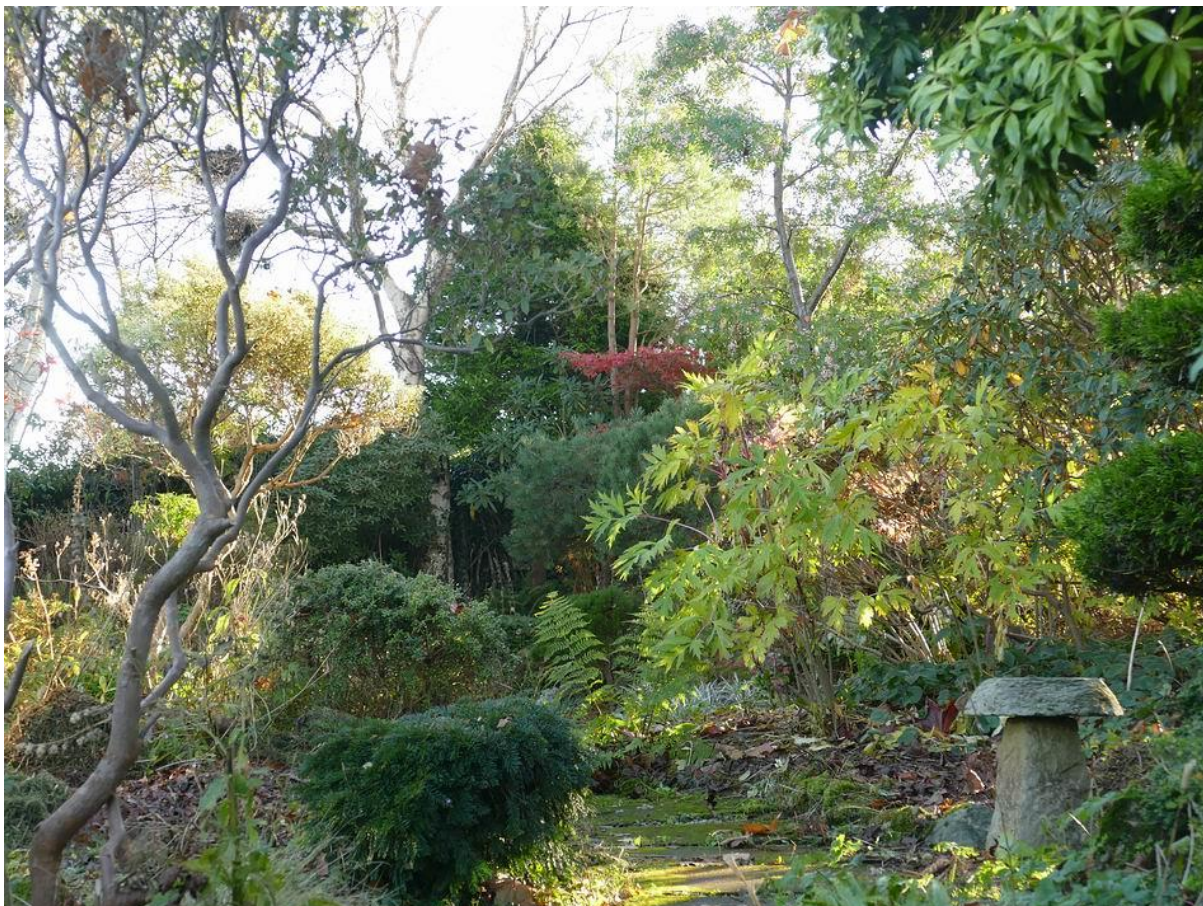
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B LOG 46.....16th November 2022





Our weather can change very quickly - it is often said if you don't like the weather wait an hour - a complete change can happen in 15 mins. This has been a record breaking week of weather with a new November high



temperature being recorded in many places. Lossiemouth, 70 miles away on the Moray Firth, had a daytime high of 19.1C and even in Aberdeen the night time temperature was around 14C when the long term average for November is a high of 9C with a low of 3C - these are averages not extremes.

The warm front was driven in from the west by strong winds laden with heavy rain keeping me inside looking through the water

lashed windows. Once the rain stopped the warm winds helped dry the ground and fallen leaves out allowing me to take full advantage of the fine periods getting on with the autumn clear up by lifting leaves.



The leaves blowing in from the street are usually the trigger for me to start clearing and cutting back the front drives so I also made a start on that this week with this picture showing the 'before'



After the initial clear up, removing most of the leaves and old growth, the ground will get a chance to dry out, that is provided we get suitable weather. Many more leaves will get blown in but I have all winter to complete the clear up before the new growth starts with the early bulbs appearing around February.



I can't get away from trees, they seem especially prominent at this time of year when their leaves fall away revealing their skeletal structure. As I work on the drive the low sunlight hits some trees in the graveyard across the road illuminating them so they stand out conspicuously against the ominous grey skies.



Also now leafless, the lovely branches and bark of the **Acer griseum** in the front garden draw my attention.



While I enjoy the deciduous nature of many trees the evergreen subjects provide important structural elements around the garden such as **Rhododendron pachysanthum** which is never without its beautiful highly decorative leaves. I am also pleased to see that despite the dry summer months and very short annual growth many of the rhododendrons still have fat flower buds to provide flowers next year.



Rhododendron rex fictolacteam with extremely stunted new growth but still it has produced flower buds.



Sadly many Larch trees are dying around the country as *Phytophthora* spreads through the plantations but we can still enjoy the beauty of the cones and foliage in this small bonsai. I especially like it as it forms a golden yellow globe before the needles drop off. Gardeners are understandably attracted to flowers, often growing plants for their blooms alone but we need to ask ourselves why we are so fixated on the flowers, fascinating as they are, when they are often very short lived.



We should prioritise growing and planting with the foliage and structure of the plants in mind because these are prominent for months rather than the few days or weeks of flowers. To that end I am not showing any of the flowers that are out this week, there are a few - instead I am concentrating on foliage and the wonderful structures revealed as the leaves fall. We spend much of the year looking down at the ground level plantings but now they have retreated underground our eyes can look upwards at the many trees and shrubs growing high above our heads.



A garden should have a good balance between deciduous and evergreen subjects the later becoming more prominent in the winter when so many of the trees shed their leaves



Our trees don't all drop their leaves at the same time: the **Acer japonicum** on the left are just starting to colour up now while the large **Acer platanoides 'Crimson King'** to the right, whose red foliage is so dominant in the summer, is now stripped down to bare branches.



Much of the garden's flower power comes early in the year before the trees leaf out, then the atmosphere of the garden changes completely as the canopy develops and we feel more enclosed in our small woodland – then, in the autumn, it all opens up again when the leaves drop and the garden is more open to the skies for seven months.



Our deciduous trees include Acer, Betula, Cotoneaster and Sorbus with the evergreens represented by Chamaecyparis Pines and Yews, among others. The woodland atmosphere also attracts a wide range of birds to feed on the berries - we have already had flocks of Redwings eating the berries with many smaller birds regularly foraging among the trees for grubs and other insect food.



As I walk my eyes are drawn down attracted by the silver foliage of some *Celmisia* plants.



This clump started out as a single rosette of *Celmisia lyallii* which increased as low growing branches, forming roots as they grow, spread out producing these secondary rosettes. It is very easy to split off some off the smaller rosettes complete with a few roots to form a new plant.



That is exactly what I did a few years ago when I pulled a rosette off the original plant re-planting it immediately in this new location – I have had success this way with a number of the Celmisia doing this any time through the autumn, winter and early spring when the weather is cool and moist.



Raised from seed and increased by division we have many Celmisia plants providing attractive evergreen foliage.



Celmisia raised from seed.



I think this is a form or hybrid of **Celmisia spectabilis**; it grows extremely well in our area as can be seen by the many large patches in local front gardens. It is easy to remove a side rosette or lift and split a large clump and so it has been passed around the neighbourhood for many years. My suspicion is that it originally came from Jack Drake's Nursery, possibly even bought at an SRGC Aberdeen Show where they always had a sales stand.



Celmisia hectorii





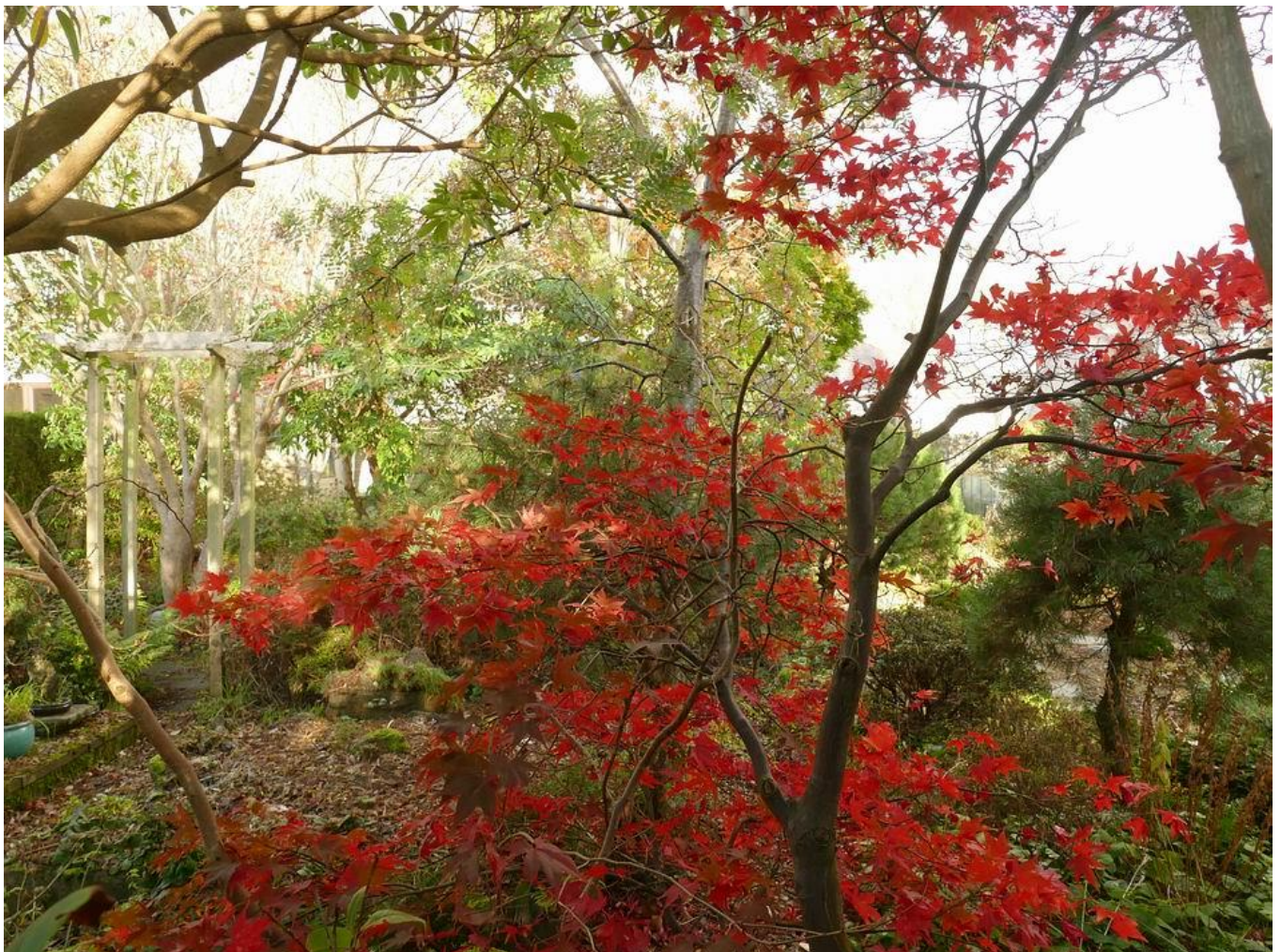
The garden is in transition with much of the autumn debris still to be cleared away through the winter as we prepare the beds for the explosion of growth that will emerge in the late winter and early spring.

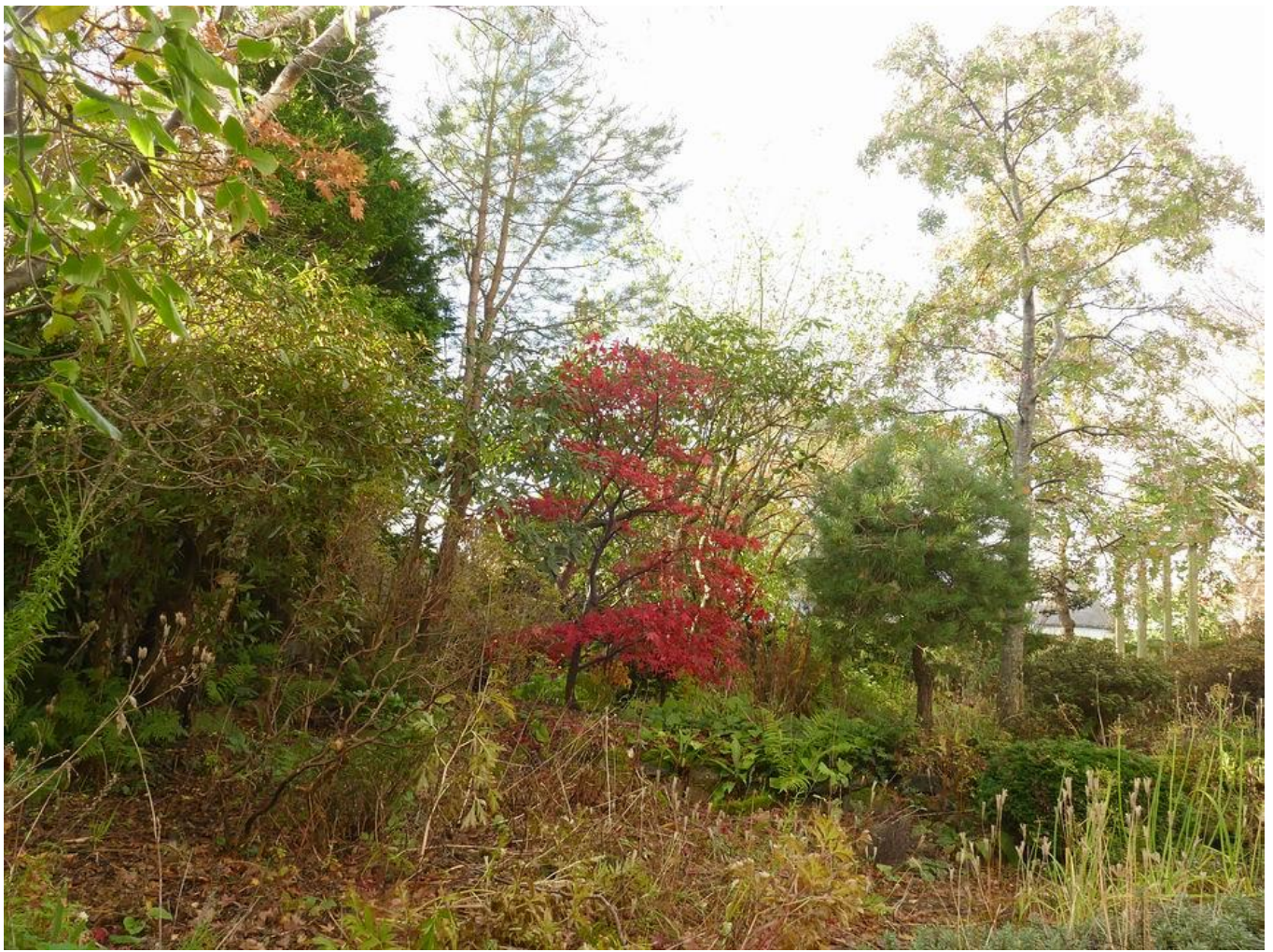


These *Sorbus hupehensis* berries are not soft or ripe enough to attract the birds yet.



The leaves of some Acers growing in the shaded parts of the garden are just colouring up now.





The mixture of trees and shrubs growing together help give the garden that wild natural look that we desire.

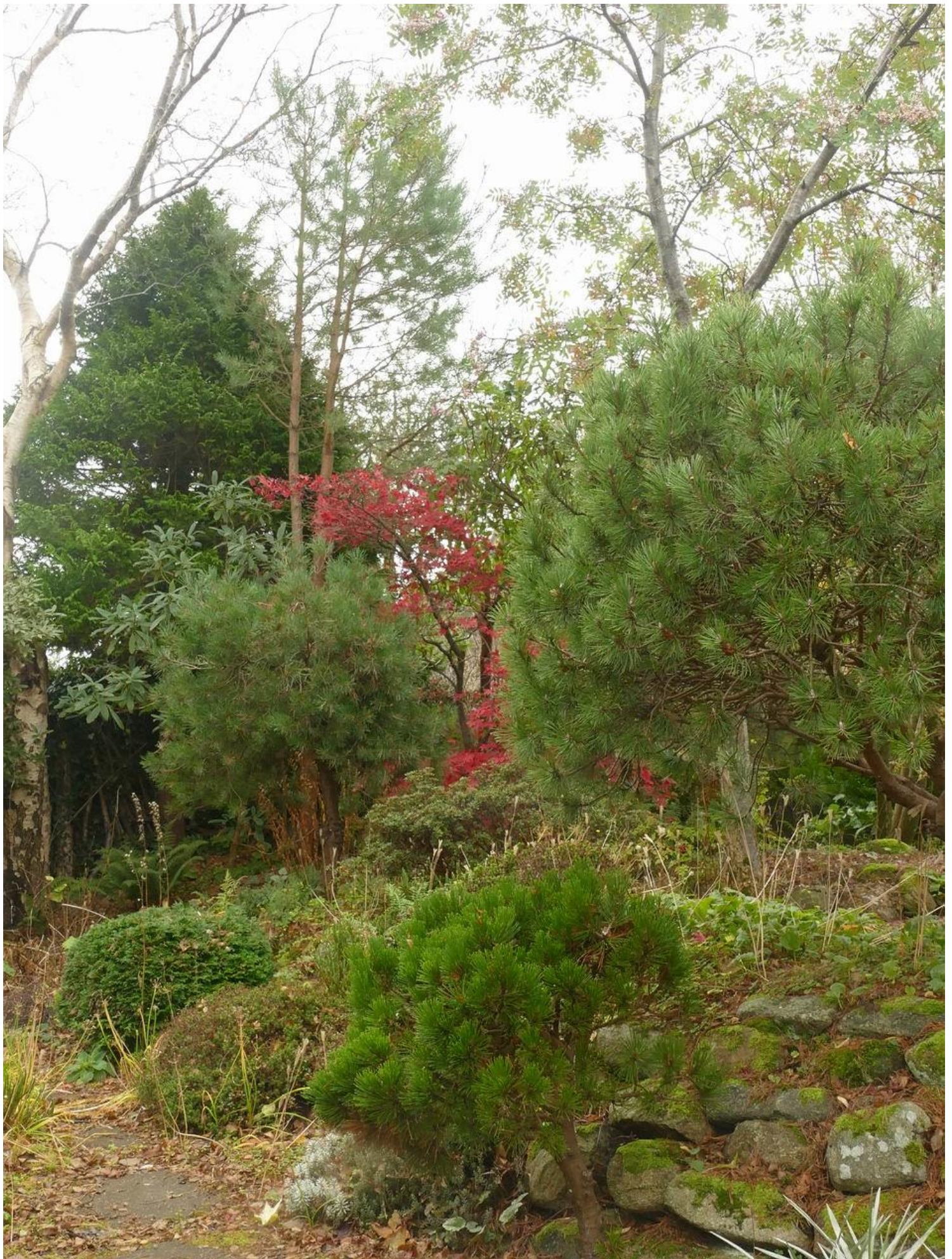




Some trees are grown in pots like the many surrounding the pond though I hesitate to call them bonsai.



As I tidy I spot the shoots of promise that there will be plenty of flowers again as the winter subsides.



The starting place for many paintings is making a mess which the artist then adjusts until they resolve the image – in the same way the beauty of spring will rise through the debris of autumn and ravages of winter so don't be too quick to tidy look past or better still appreciate the autumnal litter and work with nature's cycle.....