



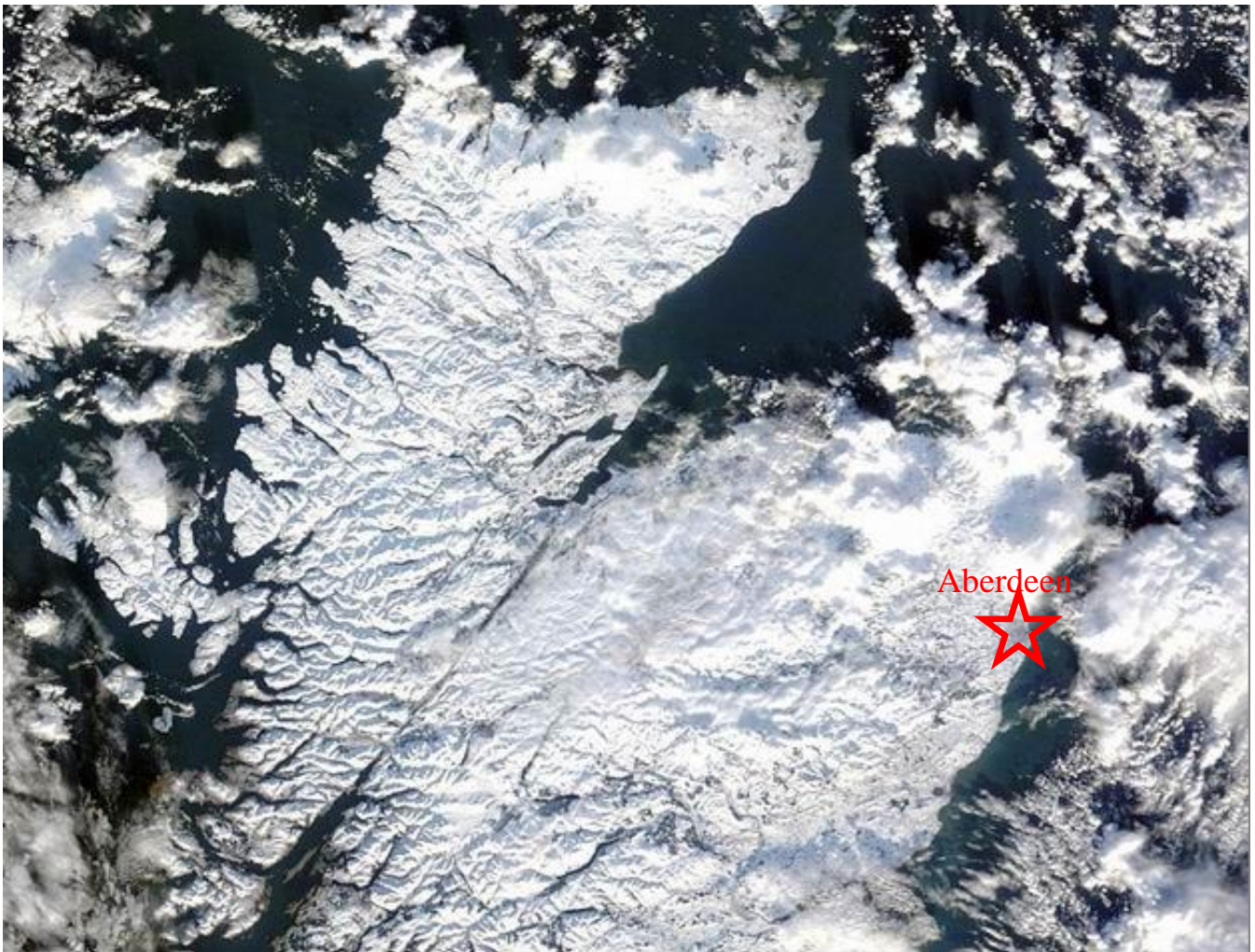
BULB LOG 47.....23rd November 2022



Aberdeen

Two of the most important factors that should concern gardeners are weather and location. Taking weather first I often say that in Aberdeen we don't have our own weather we get other people's weather – it all depends on the way the wind is blowing. This week the high pressure that brought the mild conditions of recent weeks sat to the east of us, trapping an Atlantic low pressure front, laden with water, right over us resulting in over 150% of the average November rain falling in a few days and the rain has been constant so I have spent most of the time looking out at the garden through the rain soaked windows. As the weather has kept me in all but one of this week's pictures are looking back through my archive, some I copied from slides taken long before I went digital in 2000. The weather has a huge influence over the plants we grow in our garden; firstly there is the often discussed question of hardiness which sounds like a simple question of - what is the lowest temperature that a plant can take before it dies? However it is far from simple there are so many other factors that come into the equation such as water levels, ground conditions, aspect, stage of growth, to name but a few. As a general rule plants will survive colder temperatures if they are on the dry side much better than they might if fully hydrated – it is easy to work out that if the plants cells are loaded with water, which expands and contracts as it freezes and thaws, the cell structure of the plant is more likely to get damaged.

There are some plants that we consider hardy here that are described as not hardy in the warmer south. The main reason for that is the plant in the warmer conditions of the south will mostly be in a more advanced stage of growth making it vulnerable to any late frosts while at the identical time in the colder north the same plant has not started into its seasonal growth – we regularly see our plants come into growth some four to six weeks after they would do in the south. Perhaps the question of hardiness should also now include plants that can't survive the dry summer heat some gardens are experiencing in recent years. Even we are seeing some plants that have grown well for decades starting to suffer or even die in the hotter dry spring and summer conditions of recent years and these are far less extreme than those experienced in the south.



Aberdeen sits right on the North Sea which has the effect of moderating our temperature, warming in the winter and cooling in the summer, so we don't get the severe lows or highs that many more sheltered inland areas experience. There are many adaptations we can make to help some plants survive cold wet and hot dry, the most important of which is adjusting the soils to improve drainage or moisture retention. The solution for both is to add grit and or humus. The addition of grit will open up heavy clay soils allowing water to drain away better while at the same time the additional surface area grit brings to light sandy soils will improve the water retention. Similarly adding humus will help open heavy soils and retain moisture in light soils.

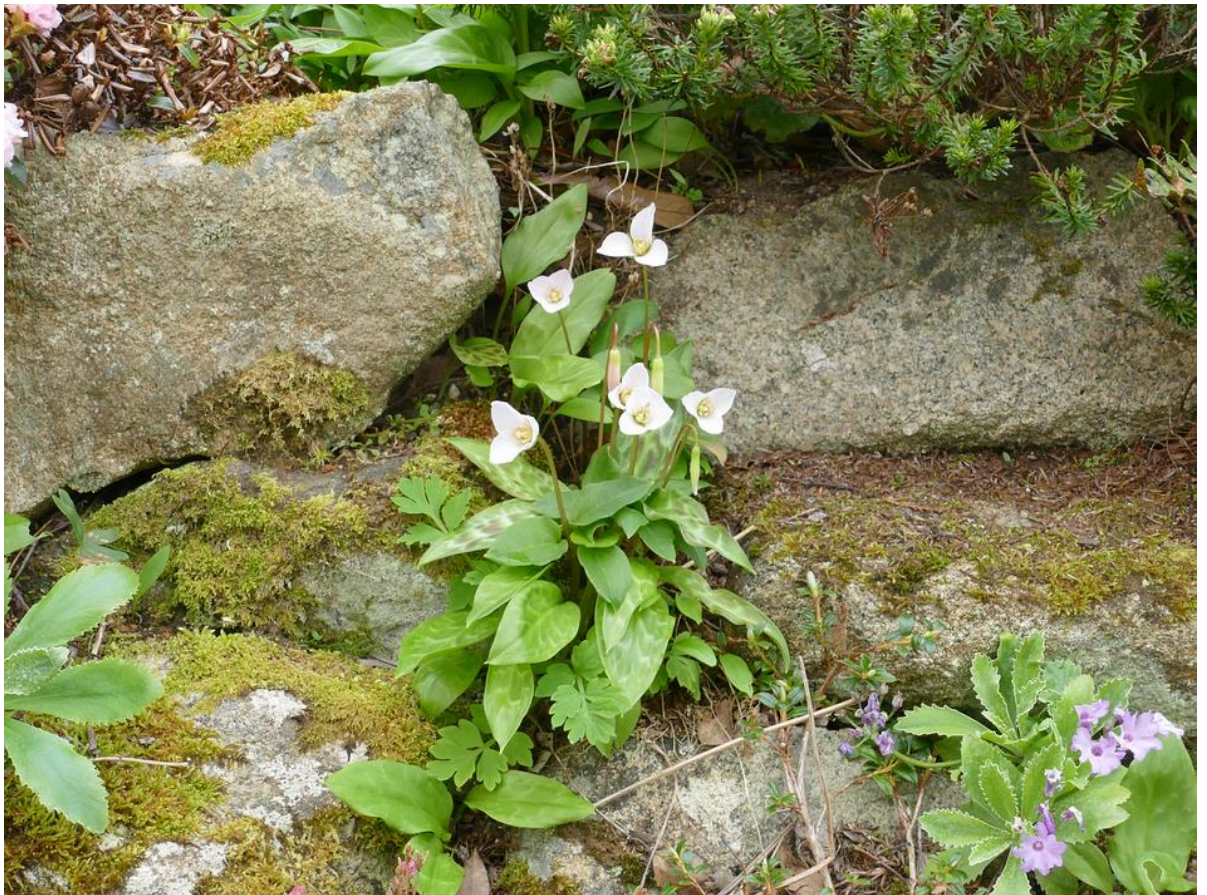


We have also employed covers to protect plants from excessive winter wet and to a lesser degree the cold but my preference is to try adjusting the soils and habitats, mostly by building raised beds and employing rocks, so the plants can better tolerate the weather. The location is also a major factor and I know a few people who have moved home to an area that has more suitable weather and ground conditions for the plants they want to grow but this is not an option for everyone. Location within a

garden is also important and sometimes moving a plant by 30cms can make a difference to how well a plant grows.

Observant gardeners will get to know that their garden is full of micro-climates that are further influenced by what we plant. Trees and large shrubs have the biggest effect on the garden conditions - most obviously by the shade they cast which can be an advantage to some plants and a disadvantage to those that like direct sun.

Rock gardeners are very familiar with the benefit that a rocky landscape, on any scale, brings for the smaller plants and alpinists.



The gaps between the rocks provide a wider range of habitats for plants to exploit. The most important lesson for a gardener, and it is sometimes a hard one to accept, is to learn to grow the plants that grow well in your conditions. To that end we were lucky that we were attracted to the small, mostly wild species, that we saw growing at Jack Drake's Inshriach Nursery in the Highlands - plants that the nursery had already selected to grow in a similar climate.



Leucogenes leontopodium was one of the first NZ plants we acquired from Jack Drake's. Jack Drake had a special interest in growing and propagating the mountain plants of New Zealand many of which we bought on our early visits to his Inshriach Nursery. These plants had been preselected at Inshriach to our Scottish weather and I feature a selection of them in the following sequence of images.



Leucogenes grandiceps

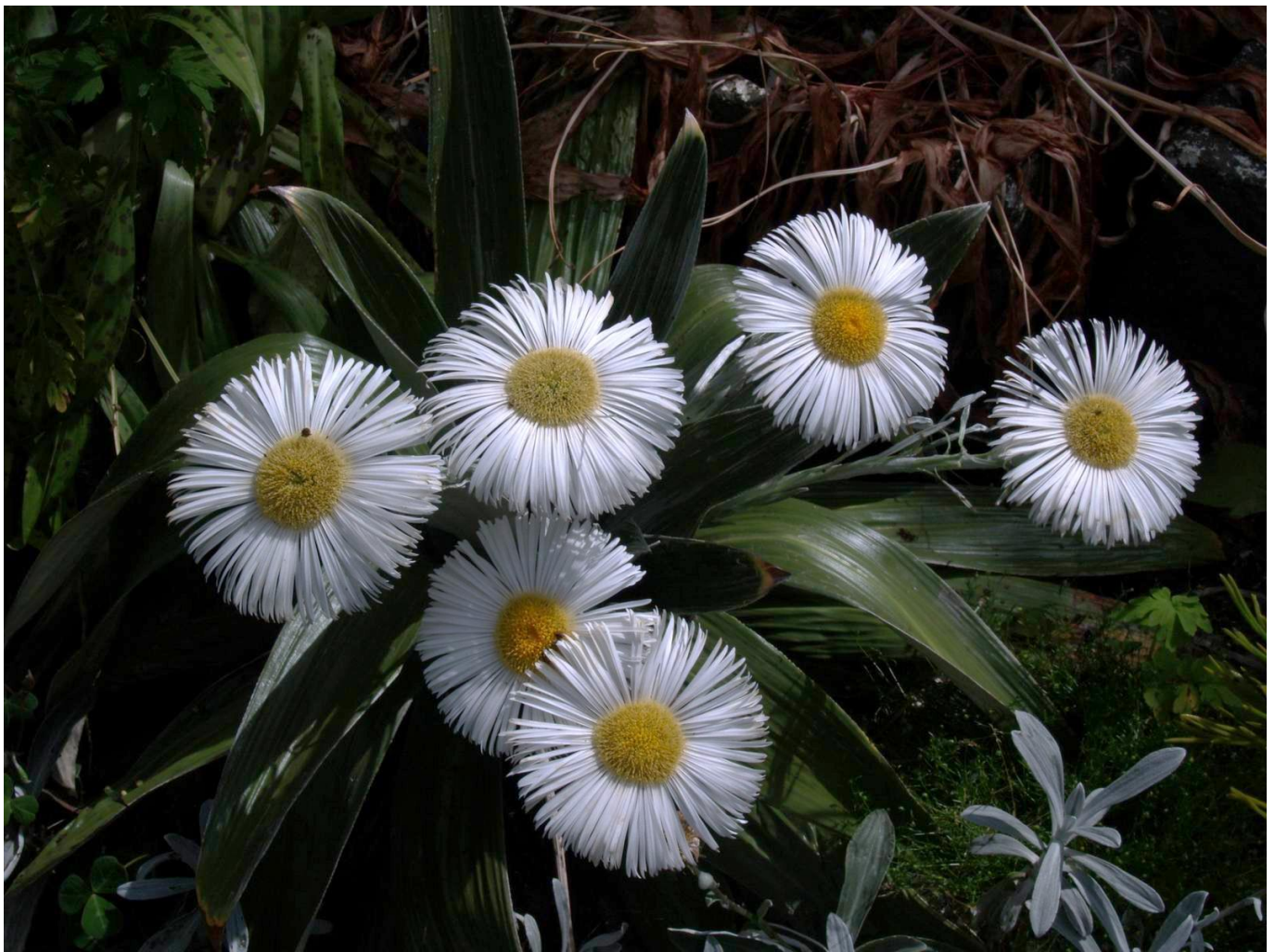


Leucogenes grandiceps

To flower well the *Leucogenes* need some exposure to sunshine similarly the cushion forming *Celmisia argentea* below tends to produce flowers on the south facing side only, that is when it is growing here in the Northern Hemisphere.



Celmisia argentea



There are a range of *Celmisia* species from the larger rosette forming ones, such as above, to the shorter growing ones that spread out to form great mats of silver foliage. It is not always clear cut to identify the different species and forms a process which is further complicated by hybridisation which happens in the wild as well as cultivation. It is often said that they are all just white daisies, which is true, but there is a lot of variation in the flowers.



***Celmisia bonplandii* ?**



Celmisia walkeri



Celmisia incana



Celmisia seedling

We have given up collecting seed from the Celmisia in the garden because it all seemed to be infertile however over the years we do find the occasional seedling appearing in the gravel areas.



Celmisia seedling



Celmisia brevifolia

We often have to cut the mats back as they spread out over the paving slabs that form the path but as you will see below the cuttings are not wasted as most of them are rooted and turned into new plants



Rooted *Celmisia* cuttings.



Cuttings taken in the early summer root within a few weeks in our small mist unit.



Cuttings of the *Raoulia eximia*, raised from NZAGS seed and shown below, also root well under mist provided they are taken early during the plant's active growing period during the spring.



Raoulia eximia



It is often written that you should never allow water to fall on the cushion of *Raoulia eximia* - this was not my experience we kept this plant growing for 12 years by constantly watering it overhead with a hosepipe.

We raised this plant along with many of those falling from seed we got through the New Zealand Alpine Garden Society seed exchange if you are at all interested I recommend you follow the link below to their excellent website and become a member.

[New Zealand Alpine Garden Society](#)



Raoulia eximia and other plants that I photographed during my 2008 trip to New Zealand if you want to see many more pictures of plants that I took on that trip follow this link to the [forum thread](#).



One of our NZ troughs.



Leptinella atrata



Leptinella atrata subsp. *luteola*



Stellaria roughii



Gaultheria depressa var. *novae-zelandiae*



Here are some of the Clematis hybrids involving *Clematis marmoraria* and *Clematis paniculata* that we made in the distant past.



We crossed *Clematis* x 'Cartmani 'Joe' (*Clematis marmoraria* x *Clematis paniculata*) back onto *Clematis marmoraria*, selecting the best seedlings to grow on. We named and exhibited a few of them when we were still showing.



Celematis 'Craigton Comet' above with 'Craigton Asteroid' below.





Two Ranunculus, I can't recall the name of this first species, both were raised from NZAGS seed.



Ranunculus crithmifolius

I will leave in the hope that the weather improves, allowing me back into the garden before next week.....