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Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 0123.....18th January 2023



Narcissus romieuxii



In 2023 I start a new chapter with a Bulb Log appearing just once a month instead of weekly as I have done over the last twenty years. It will go online at the usual time on a Wednesday around the middle the month so publication does not coincide with the International Rock Garden (IRG) which is loaded for the last Friday of a month. The content and format will not change as I will cover the subjects that capture my attention in the garden and surrounding nature. This month I open

with the hoop petticoat **Naricissus romieuxii** some of which are currently flowering in the bulb houses.



The weather since the bulbs were watered at the beginning of September, after their dry summer rest, especially the temperature has a big effect on the flowering time of these early flowering forms. Initially it was relatively warm encouraging buds to appear quite early this season but then it turned cold with freezing conditions through December which slowed the development of the flower buds.



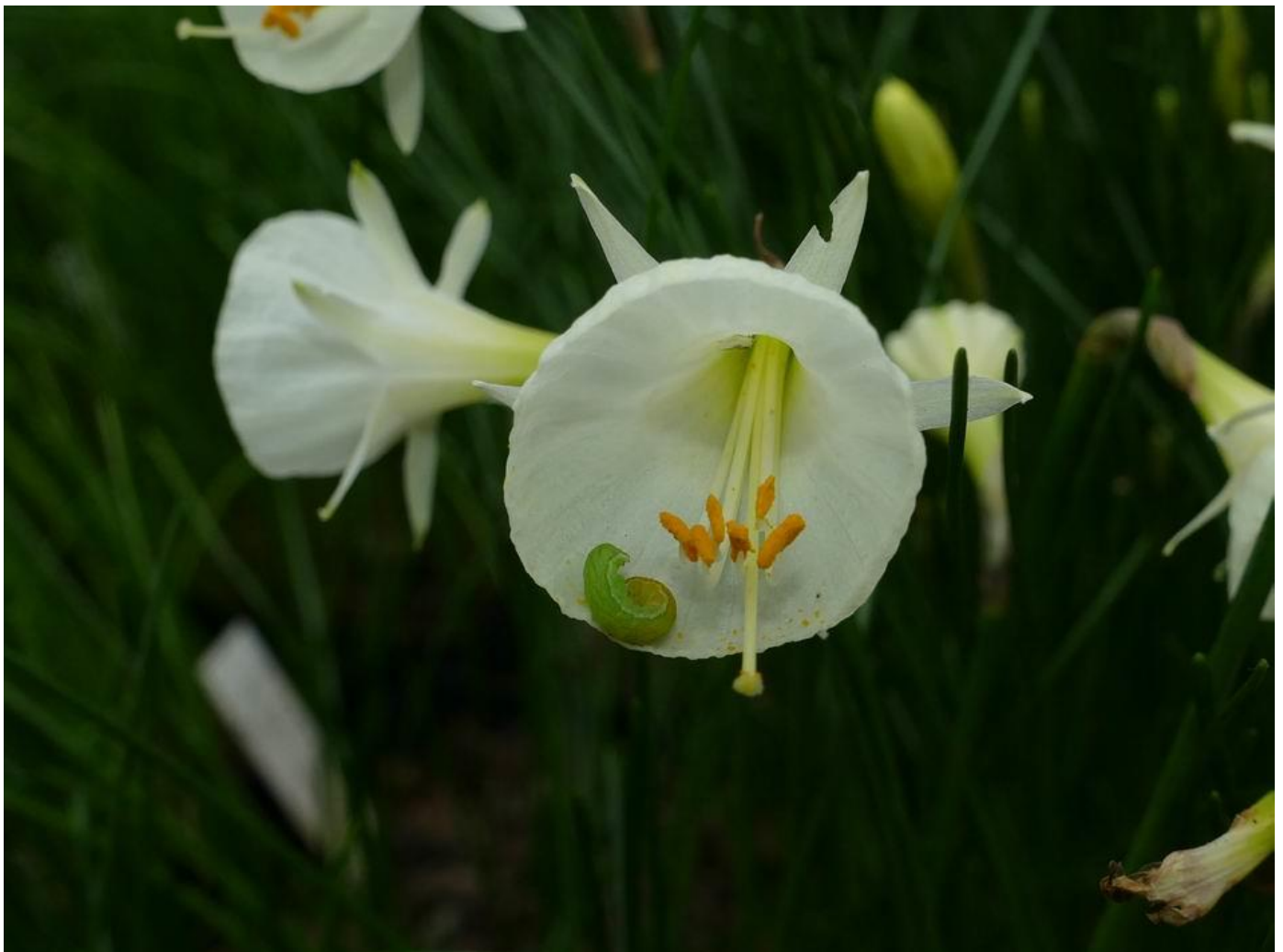
There are a lot of flower buds among the jungle of foliage yet to open and hopefully more still underground but I get the feeling that we may have fewer flowers this year in the sand beds than in previous years. It may just be the sporadic flowering rather than a mass flowering that gives that impression but I will be watching closely to work out if I need to adjust my feeding and watering regime to accommodate the changing weather pattern.



As I have discussed previously we have many hybrid seedlings growing in the sand beds some like this are close to what I know as **Narcissus romieuxii**.



Many of the hybrids are very similar but occasionally one form stands out from the crowd as distinct and attracts my attention. One such I have named **Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice'** because of the distinctive cup shaped corona. I was wondering what had been eating the flowers, suspecting a slug or snail until I spotted a small green caterpillar which had survived the recent weeks of freezing conditions.



Caterpillar on **Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice'** flower.



My selection of **Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice'** as distinct was tested to the extreme as a few years ago. When repotting the Narcissus I came across a pot that had lost its label so I planted all the contents at random through the sand beds – unfortunately that turned out to be my only pot of Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice' that I was carefully building up. As they stand out so well from the crowd over the last few years I have recovered some of the bulbs from the sand and after about five years I am back to having a pot to increase while there are some still growing in the sand beds.



Narcissus romieuxii?



Narcissus hybrids



Narcissus hybrids



Narcissus hybrids – the strong yellow funnel shaped corona suggests *Narcissus bulbocodium* is involved here.



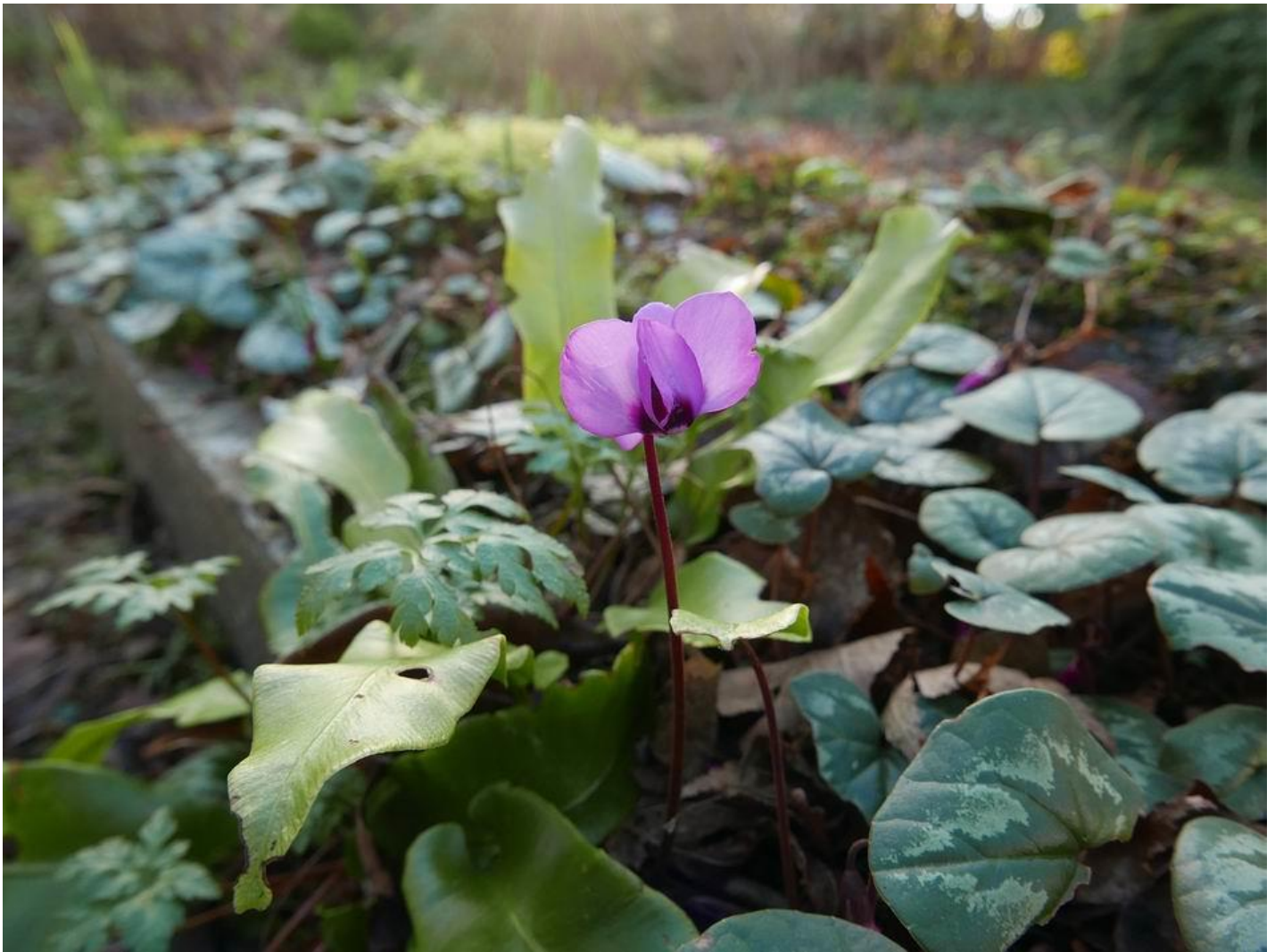
Narcissus bulbocodium



As I walk around the garden I spot masses of shoots pushing their way upwards and from a ground level view point I can catch the low sun in the same image as these buds of **Helleborus x smithii**.



I have not removed the old leaves from this *Helleborus x smithii* mostly because they spread out so do not block the light reaching the buds – I will cut the leaves back before the new leaf growth gets going.



The very first of the **Cyclamen coum** flower has opened many more are still lying on the ground among the foliage.

While we wait the appearance of all the early flowers this decorative group of foliage a silver leaved form of *Cyclamen hederifolium*, *Milium effusum* 'Aureum' and *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens' have given decoration all winter long.





As the weather permits I am slowly getting the beds cleared of old growth and mulched, such as this bulb bed, now ready for the new growth while I have more work to do gathering yet more leaves as the Cotoneaster trees are still shedding.



These beds will soon be full of flowering bulbs starting with the Snowdrops.



The first of this year's Galanthus flowers are in full view but so far it has been too cold for them to open.



There are hundreds of snowdrops to look forward to in the coming months.



Galanthus woronowii



I am noticing more moss growing around the garden than in previous years I am not sure if it is a change in conditions or as a result of us allowing it to grow in certain areas to create moist habitats for plants to seed into.



If we left it unchecked the moss would completely cover the rocks but I want to strike a balance between the rocks and the moss so I will remove some of the moss to reveal the stone while leaving mossy areas for plants to seed.



One area where I am leaving the moss is on the broken concrete that I used to landscape this narrow bed. It is planted with *Hepatica* and *Corydalis* which are both seeding around and into the moss covered concrete where they have been joined by other plants such as *Meconopsis* which found this habitat to their liking.



There is a similar narrow bed joining on to that concrete bed which was landscaped decades ago with tufa and it has also disappeared under a growth of moss. The moss has not had any detrimental effect to the saxifrages that are growing there and indeed most of my intervention has not been to control the moss but to control all the other plants that chose to seed there.



This narrow bed rises up to the rock garden bed where there are a number of mosses that I do control to some degree but I am also fascinated to see how well the plants might manage the habitat for themselves – in addition to the bulbs we originally planted Crocus, Cyclamen and Hepatica are among the subjects growing with the moss.



Galanthus plicatus hybrid

I will leave you this month with a Galanthus plicatus hybrid flowering through a carpet of leaves and moss with the expectation that Snowdrops will feature heavily next month