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# BULB LOG 08.....13th August 2025

The slab beds and troughs give a good reflection of how the climate changes are affecting the plants we can grow. In recent years we have seen changes in the plants we grow, or more correctly, the plants that grow for us. One stalwart is the **Cyananthus lobatus hybrid**. It has grown on this bed for well over thirty years coming back a bit bigger each year as it spreads out from a cluster of lacy roots. It has never set any seed but I am sure, if I wanted, I could lift and split the roots to make new plants. In the same bed we also grow a number of plants of **Cyananthus microphyllus** which has suffered from the hotter drier conditions we have experienced in the last few years, some dying out completely while others have just held on with less vigour. Plants can tolerate such conditions at certain times of the year better than others. For instance, they might survive a hot dry summer but not the same conditions when they are actively growing in the spring.

I treat each and every trough as an experiment to observe how different plants will respond to the habitat, aspect and the weather conditions. Once established I rarely water them and one of the most remarkable survivors is this tiny trough that I landscaped and planted in a demonstration some time pre-2000. The aim was to demonstrate how you can build up depth in a shallow container using rocks. On the way to the demonstration, I pulled bits off of some saxifrages and a primula simply to give an impression of plants in the new landscape. All these bits took root and continue to grow.

The smaller forms of Primula marginata and some silver saxifrages have proven to be among the most resilient plants surviving in unwatered troughs, through the driest of spells, provided they are shaded from the full sun for most of the day – this is why aspect and the position of the through is so important.
I was not surprised that the silver saxifrage in the left side of this trough came through the hot dry period but was pleasantly surprised to find that the bright green Sino Himalayan **Saxifraga brunonis** has also done well (see below).

**Saxifraga brunonis,** named for Robert Brown (1773-1858), a prominent Scottish botanist.

Now for some plants that have not done so well in the drought. This trough I landscaped with roof slates and planted 30 plus years ago with a number of plants including **Raoulia australis** that grew spreading out to cover almost two thirds of the area. Now it has mostly died out, frazzled in the hot dry conditions, however a few bits have survived and given favourable conditions, these will form a nucleus from which it can grow out and spread again. We mostly see pictures of troughs that are recently planted and looking fresh, but it is not easy to keep them looking like that in the long term, so I like to share what actually happens. If you want to see these troughs growing better or to read more about our methods and troughs click the link to Bulb Log 2420.

Over the years I have found out which plants are survivors. Patches of the Raoulia manage to hang on vegetatively and regrow while others set seeds to survive. This trough was planted by scattering seeds of **Erinus alpinus** across the limestone landscape. Erinus alpinus is a real survivor and must be one of the easiest of alpines to grow but even some plants of it have suffered in recent conditions.

The dead twigs are not all that remains of this plant look below them where you will see a mass of seedlings that will grow and give us flowers next year.

Looking down on the trough it is interesting to see which plants have survived and try and work out: why?

Over the years we have refined the plants we grow, or rather, they have selected themselves by surviving long term. among the survivors is the silvery grey leaved **Potentilla pulvinaris**.

Like most of our plants we grew **Potentilla pulvinaris** from seed planting the resulting seedlings in this slab bed and from there it has seeded itself gently around the original plants.

**Potentilla pulvinaris** has also seeded itself into the crevice like cracks between the slabs and it is one of the plants that we allow to grow there.

**Hypericum reptans** is another trailing plant that used to grow well in this bed. Over many years it spread out trailing down the sides until it died out last year in similar hot dry conditions. Hypericum reptans survives in another bed and it has also left this seedling growing in between the slabs. This is not the most convenient place for it to grow it is liable to get stood on but when a plant chooses where to grow, as here, we have learned to leave them.

I can’t remember the name of this small Hypericum. We raised it from seed many years ago and it also seeded in the slab beds however in the hot dry conditions of the last few years we thought it had disappeared completely until we spotted a seedling growing in a shallow granite trough next to the slab bed. I need to figure out why it survived here but not in the slab beds.

One plant that appears to have enjoyed the hot dry conditions is this small **white Daphne** that we were gifted several years ago. It has survived well in a slab bed but this year it flowered better than ever before and now it has formed drupes, which I have harvested, removed the seed and sown; with my fingers crossed for germination!

It is typical in our garden to see unusual plants growing side by side with common, often called ‘weedy’ plants but what they all have in common is that they are survivors that can adapt and grow in our ever-changing conditions.

**Prunella vulgaris, Papaver cambricum and Primula marginata** growing in a perfect harmony.

As we move into summer the garden changes character as early flowering bulbs and plants retreat underground, avoiding the hot dry conditions, leaving the garden space for the self-seeding volunteer plants such as **Aconitum vulparia** and **Linaria purpurea** (below) to take over.

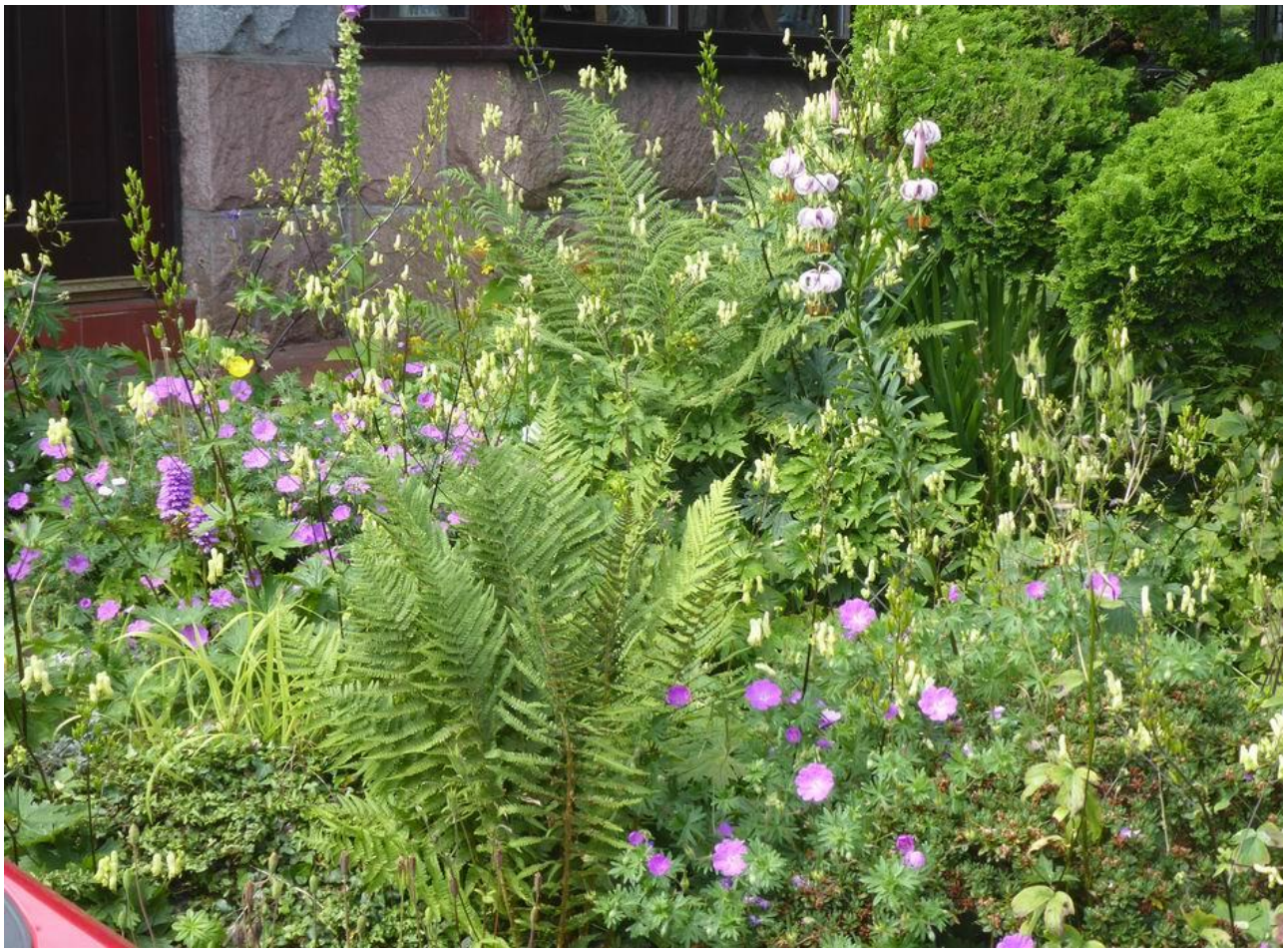
**Linaria purpurea**

It is a similar situation in the front garden where the self-seeders feature in the summer. As well as looking good and utilising the space these are valuable plants that benefit the pollinators - something that is important to us.

**Lilium lankongense** flowers rise up among the more common plants in the front garden.

**Hypericum androsaemum and Hypericum calycinum** must be among the most commonly seen plants in gardens as they arrive freely as volunteers and they are pretty enough in flower for people to allow them to grow. They are valuable because the flowers attract a constant stream of bees and pollinators then the seeds attract the birds which spread them about.

Spot the bees.



Between the driveways and adjacent beds the path to our front door is wild, floriferous and often scented.

I have often stated that it is the smallest of flowers that attract the most insects and that is the case with **Origanum majorana** which is always covered in several species of bees especially when it is bathed in sunshine.

Now the waves of early flowering plants rest underground but the beds are not lying bare, they continue to bring us visual as well as botanical interest.

We encourage self seeders such as **Tanacetum parthenium** to flower though the summer until the autumn flowering bulbs start to appear.

The next sequence of views from around the garden show what the garden looks like in the summer when my time is spent cutting and shredding the hedges.

**Achillea millefolium**, (Yarrow) shares the beds in harmony with more unusual plants.

A Wood Mouse shares a feeder with a Blue Tit in our equal opportunity garden of survivors.