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Bulb Log Diary -----

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BULB LOG 09.....16th September 2026





I cannot remember if I have ever used a similar picture for the cover twice in succession before, but I wanted to highlight just how long these plants flower. **Achillea millefolium** featured prominently last month and despite the hot dry conditions is still providing a spectacle for us and attracting insects. The *Cyananthus lobatus* hybrid has also performed well flowering freely for weeks on end. The recent hot dry conditions have proved a challenge to many gardeners and plants. Often the question is to water or

not to water? In the past I have watered, but mostly it has been the many plants we grow in containers such as the troughs and bonsai that I concentrated on. I have always believed that the best long term solution is to make the plants search for water by delving deeper. Newly planted subjects will need some water until their roots get established but watering encourages the roots to stay near the surface rather than going deep in search of the moisture. The most resilient plants are often those that have seeded and grown in the garden where their roots grow out naturally and have not been constrained in a pot or seed tray for their first phase of growth.

The weather leaves its mark on the garden with all growth being noticeably less this year. New growth and leaves are all less than we might normally expect with many of the plants having shown signs of distress in the most challenging times. Of course, there will always be plants that thrive in the new conditions, and it is those plants that gardeners need to adopt.



I have noticed that despite reduced growth it is an excellent year for berries on trees such as *Sorbus aucuparia*.



The growth of the hedges is also less than we see in a normal wet year, but hedge cutting is still one of the major seasonal jobs that I try and get done in August. You may also notice the family of Sparrows perched along the roof ridge. The 'Red Sparrows' live in and fly around the garden at high speed in groups, they also treat the bulbs houses like their own. They love having dust baths in the sand when it dries out in the summer and I also feed them suet pellets daily on one of the bottom shelves and that is what they are queuing up waiting for here.



It was alarming to see the obvious signs of the drought displayed by **Gentiana asclepiadea** its leaves hanging limp and looking very sorry for itself. Rhododendron leaves in the top left corner are doing the very same.



Spring flowering ericaceous plants often have a second flowering in the autumn as displayed on this **Phyllodoce caerulea**.



I have always been drawn to the small ericaceous plants which have grown well for us until the changing weather we have experienced in recent years. Fortunately, many have evolved small and or narrow leaves as an adaptation to growing on mountain hillsides where they can get dried by the winds. While they are not thriving, they are doing what they have evolved to do; surviving in harsh conditions.



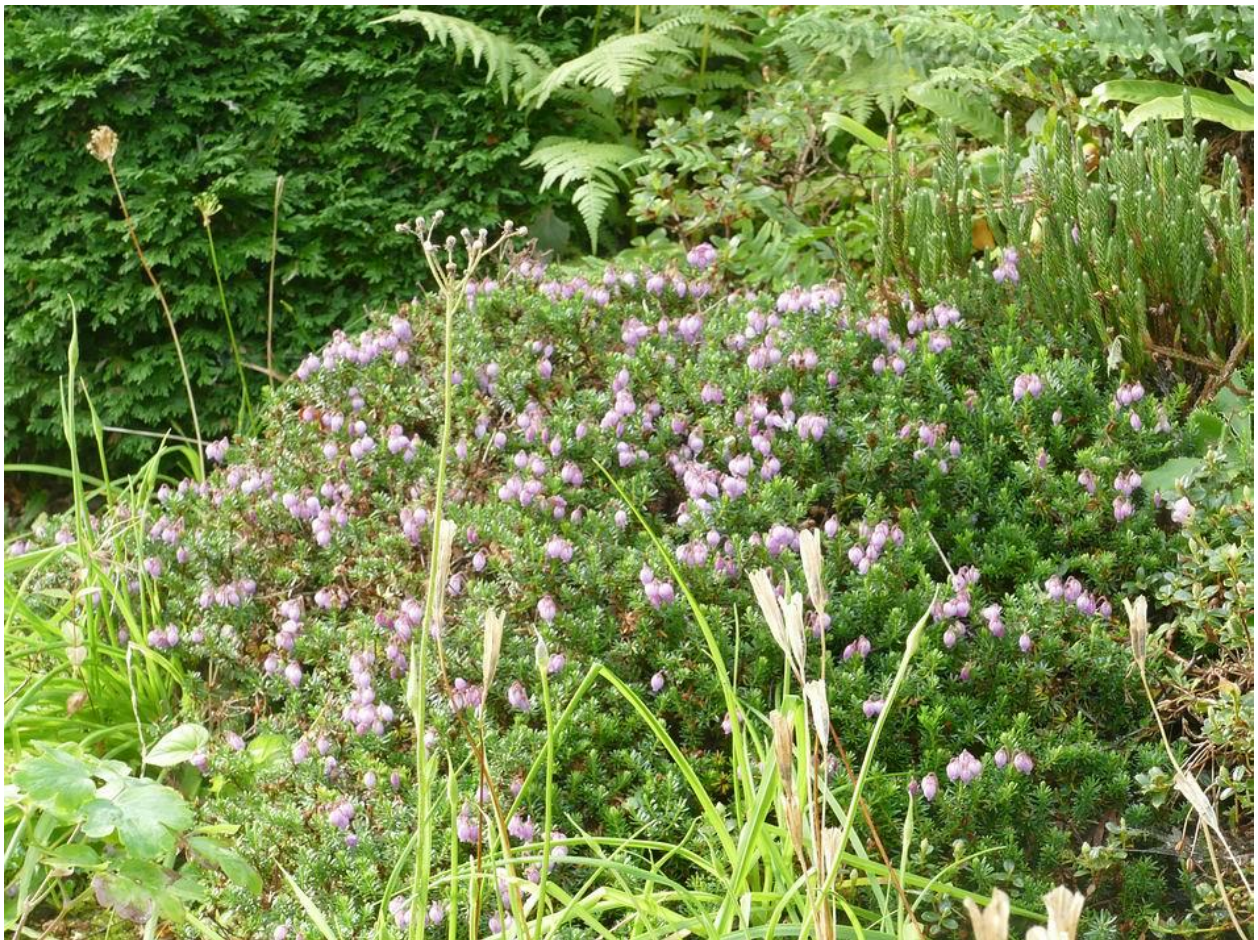
At last we got some rain. It lasted through the day and overnight and had an immediate effect on the plants which showed their relief with their leaves now turgid. I used to water the garden, especially the newly planted subjects, but now I prefer to make the plants push their roots out to search for moisture as discussed in the opening paragraphs. It is the case that if you constantly water then the plant roots will stay in the surface layers where you are applying the water rather than searching far and wide for more stable moist ground.



By observing the plants growers will find those that can best adapt in their garden to the changing climate although this process will be self-regulating as many plants will die out in the long dry periods.



I am still a big advocate of using low growing plants that spread out, cover and shade the ground helping reduce the evaporation rate and preserving any moisture. The ground covering plants also add to the ‘natural’ look of the garden and reduce the opportunity for ‘weeds’ to get a hold.



We do not have a garden of specimen plants instead we build plant communities that support each other and flower in sequence.



Moving through the month I have cut the hedges and started to shred the 'crop' of organic matter.



Piles of shredded hedge are placed in suitable places, where they will not smother plants, to compost for a few months by which time they can be spread out as a mulch.



Piles of green shreadings, carefully placed where they will not harm any growing or emerging plants.



1st September is the time I add the first storm to the bulb houses. You may spot the sand plunge on the right is slightly darker than the other two because it has had some water applied. Each of these relatively small plunges had six five litre cans of water applied. The next day I checked how far down the water had penetrated and added some more water until I was satisfied all the sand was moist.



This Muscari, I grew from seed, is always a good indicator of when I need to start watering the plunges and pots because it shows leaves before I start.



As we move through the month the Cyananthus flowers continue to delight.



Achillea flowers also look fresh, only in the last week are they starting to show browning, but these flowers have served us well and now pass the baton on to the autumn flowering bulbs.



Continuing the survey of flowers a **Silene dioica** seedling has pushed some out of season flowers up through a fern.



I am disappointed that this **Eucomis bicolor** is not flowering better. Having had a poor flowering last year I expected each plant to flower this year but now I am suspecting it is the lack of moisture that has resulted in the poor display of this summer wet growing species.



Autumn flowering Crocus flowers are suddenly appearing all around the garden.



Autumn flowering Colchicum are also rushing into flower as the weather cools.



And the late summer/ autumn garden stalwart **Cyclamen hederifolium** is also flowering across the garden



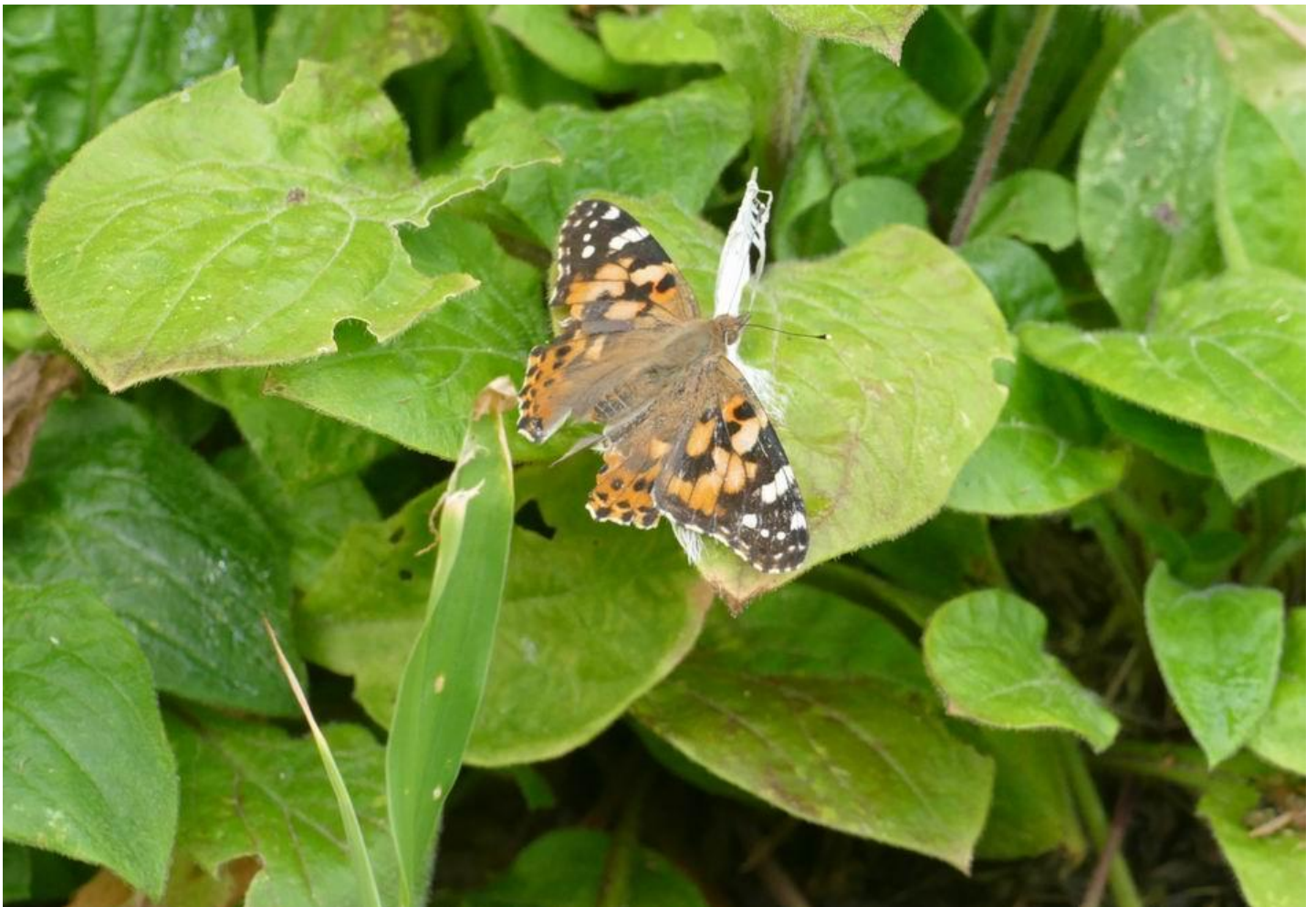
Cyclamen hederifolium



Cyclamen hederifolium



Cyclamen hederifolium



I spotted a few Painted Lady butterflies in the garden.



The new growth on the trees is noticeably shorter and their leaves a bit smaller than they are in a wet year but other than that they are doing well and, as stated above, there are prolific berries appearing on the fruiting trees.



The Gentian has responded well to the return of the rains producing its welcome blue flowers.



The final image this week, a garden hybrid Crocus, is a hint of what I expect will feature next month as we enter peak autumn crocus season.