



BULB LOG.....27-11-2003



Frit house November

I have had to water the plunge of the frit house this month. This is not normal for us as November is usually cold and damp but this year it has been exceptionally mild and sunny causing the plunge to dry out much quicker than normal. As long as you keep the plunge damp you should not need to water the pots of Fritillaria directly until the first signs of growth starts to appear. It is essential that they do not dry out completely and if you are unsure of the moisture level you can lift a pot out of the plunge and then you should be able to tell if it is dry or not. If you do lift a pot out of the plunge it is important to water the plunge around the pot, after you have replaced it, to ensure that there is a good contact between the plunge and the sides of the clay pot.



Frit seeds

To ensure best results you should have sown all your bulb seeds by now but if like me you still have some lurking in the fridge, get them sown soon.

Fritillaria seeds should be surface sown and like all bulbs you do not need to 'sow thinly'. The size of pot we use depends on the amount of seed we have - for small amounts of seed we start with a 7cm pot and go up to a 13cm pot for larger amounts. As you can see we do not sow thinly we place all the seeds we have of that species into one pot. In the close up on the right you will see

many pale 'seeds' these will not germinate - the fertile seed is darker in colour and you can usually see the darker outline of the embryo in the centre. The pots are top dressed with 1 to 2 cms of gravel and then placed into our seed frames.

Seed frames Nov.03

The pots remain in the uncovered frames through the winter and when the first ones start to germinate, early in the year, we take them under glass to protect them from the physical battering of the weather.



Narcissus seedlings

I have mentioned that due to lack of space I now sow seed of some bulb seed back into the pot of the parent bulb, like I did with this narcissus. You can see the adult foliage towards the centre with all the seedlings pushing through. This seed was sown deeply, at least half way down the pot, which is what I recommend for Narcissus, Crocus, etc.

Seedling-pot

I know people worry that the tiny seed will never find its way up from that sort of depth but here is proof of just how easily they will come from even the bottom of a pot.





Crocus mathewii seedlings

Another method with bulb seed is to sow them immediately they are ripe. This pot of *Crocus mathewii* seedlings was sown halfway down the pot in May this year - the pot was then kept completely dry under glass and only watered in September along with all the other pots of bulbs. You can see that a good germination has resulted and I am sure that you will agree that the leaves are a of good size for the first growth from a crocus seed - this is the result of sowing at depth.



Fritillaria davidii.

Fritillaria davidii is one of the recent introductions from China. It can start to make roots as early as June or July and slugs just love the unusual foliage which appears in November so we spread some slug pellets around the frame.



Tropaeolum x2

Remember the *Tropaeolum azureum* from the previous logs? Here it is on the left showing the growth it has made to date. If I had not pinched out the top growth we would just have one spindly growth instead we have a nice bushy plant that should give us a wonderful display next spring. On the right is *Tropaeolum tricolor* which does not need the same treatment as it has a much more vigorous growth habit - we have found both these plants are hardy under cold glass down to at least -15C.



Arisaema berries, frost

We have had some cold frosts this week, the first signs of winter on its way, and I will leave you with a pretty picture of the ice crystals on these colourful *Arisaema* berries.