



BULB LOG 183rd May 2006



New bulb display area

What a good time we had in Gothenburg: thanks to all who made our visit very special. This is the new public bulb display area which consists of a very large glass roof with no sides at all so the watering can be controlled while the ventilation is perfect - the bulbs are planted in a series of raised beds.



Bulb house Gothenburg

Behind the scenes there are many more bulbs like these housed in a large polycarbonate house – the bulbs here are mostly in pots plunged into sand in raised beds. Over the next few weeks I will post more pictures from my Gothenburg trip in the bulb log feed back pages of the forum.



Corydalis x 'Craigton Blue'

I just had to show you this plant and label ☺. I am sure that you all get fed up with me showing you pictures of Corydalis x 'Craigton Blue' when it is in flower and telling you what a good plant I think it is, well, I am so pleased to learn that it is one of Henrik Zetterlund's favourite plant introductions to the garden.



Corydalis and Erythronium

Back home in the garden the erythroniums are in full bloom and making a lovely display along with Corydalis 'George Baker' which is still in flower.



Lifting erythronium bulbs

I am often asked “when is the best time to move erythronium bulbs” and the normal answer is, when they are dormant. However while that is the best time to minimise disturbance to the bulbs’ growth, it may not be the best time for you and perhaps leaving the bulbs where they are would set them back even more than moving them when they are in full growth. These bulbs were planted close to a *Vaccinium* which was starting to overgrow them; I had meant to move them last summer when they were dormant but I forgot – out of site, out of mind. So I decided not to risk that again and dig them up now. When lifting erythroniums always dig deeper than you think I dig a deep hole along side the clump and then slowly and carefully rub away the soil, like an archaeologist, until I find the depth that the bulbs are at. Then it is easy to go under them and gently remove the bulbs without any damage.



Erythronium bulbs in growth

Erythronium bulbs do not have a lot of roots even when they are in full growth; I think they absorb a lot of moisture and nutrient through the scales of the bulb. The roots will continue to extend as the flower matures then the new bulb will form as the seeds set, before dormancy comes around.



Watering in

I replanted the bulbs into three clumps then watered them in very well. This is the most important part even if the ground is wet because the watering washes the soil down into any spaces that you may have left so it is in good contact with the roots. If it is very hot and dry you will have to water the newly replanted bulbs a few more times just to ensure their well being.



Fritillaria imperialis

Another common question is “why won’t my *Fritillaria imperialis* flower” and again the answer is not always a simple one. Some clones will flower better than others in your garden conditions and the clone that flowers well for me may not flower well for you and vice versa. I like to raise them from seed so that by the time they reach maturity they will have selected themselves to your conditions; the ones that dislike your conditions will most likely have died along the way. If you look at the flowering stem you will notice that the stem from the last leaf whorl to the flower is a dark red colour, also a few of the non flowering stems have this same colour - this is better seen against the grey background. Those with all green stems are at least two years off of flowering while those with the red stem above the last leaf whorl are semi-mature and should produce a flower next year. I find that to flower well they need a sunny aspect that will dry out in summer and I also give them a top dressing of sulphate of potash, applied any time now, just to help feed up the bulb.



Fritillaria davisii

A few frits from the frit-house are still in clay pots like *Fritillaria davisii* but I will be moving them into square plastic ones when I next replot them. These have been photographed in my plastic greenhouse which as I showed you last week which doubles up as a great studio.



Fritillaria hermonis amana EKB1034

EKB1034 is one of the finest forms of *Fritillaria hermonis amana* with long elegant well marked bells and shiny green leaves.



Fritillaria montana

One of the taller frits that would probably look better in the garden is *Fritillaria montana*. I have several forms which came under many different names but all turn out to be this species.



Fritillaria kotschyana

Back on the Gothenburg trail this is a seed raised pot of *Fritillaria kotschyana* (GBK102) which is quite different to most of the other forms we have, showing just how variable a species can be.



Scoliopus bigelowii and hallii

Both *Scoliopus bigelowii* and *hallii* are in flower or are just going over and hopefully setting seed. I love them both but you could probably be certified for wanting them as they are curious little flowers, especially *hallii*, that you could easily walk past and never see. Both of these are growing in fish box troughs but we also have them growing and self seeding in the open garden. The secret of keeping them growing is never let them dry out or get too hot in the summer, they do not like it.



Trillium rivale

Two flowering pots of *Trillium rivale* from our own garden seed which also illustrate the wide variation in colour and markings this delightful small trillium can have – you are unlikely to walk past these in the garden. There have been some fantastic forms shown on the forum pages recently.



Tulipa saxatilis

I will leave you this week with a lovely form of *Tulipa saxatilis* also sourced from Gothenburg. I am currently writing a review of a new book on Tulips by Richard Wilford from Kew, the review will appear in the July edition of 'The Rock Garden'.

Watch the forum for pictures from Gothenburg.