



## BULB LOG.....31-01-2007



Daffodils everywhere

The bulb houses are bursting with Daffodils in flower, everywhere I look there are beautiful flowers and the sweet scent from them hangs in the air making it very easy to spend hours looking at each pot to see what is happening. There are still quite a lot of pots not showing any signs of growth above ground but the heaving gravel mulch lets me know that the bulbs are pushing up and will soon break into the light.



Narcissus romieuxii x mesatlanticus

There are so many good forms and hybrids involving *Narcissus romieuxii* that you can run out of space trying to grow them all. This is an excellent selection of *Narcissus romieuxii* x *mesatlanticus* SF151 that I received as a few bulbs some years ago and it bulks up well if you grow it properly and you soon have a fat potful. Like all forms of *Narcissus romieuxii* the corona continues to expand for some time after the flowers unfurl until they reach their full size. These flowers are just opening and will not reach their full size for another two weeks to a month depending on the temperatures we have.



*Narcissus romieuxii*  
(X's)

Another one that I received as a bulb was *Narcissus romieuxii* (X's), I am not sure who selected this form but again it is a good doer and increases well. These flowers are not as wide as some but it has a good yellow colour.

Watering of these pots, now the leaves and flowers are formed, can be reduced but I must not let them dry out.

Now I am using only plastic pots I do not need to water nearly as much as I did when the bulbs were growing in clay pots and as long as the temperatures remain low in the bulb house watering is much less frequent. As the sun rises in the sky and will soon shine directly onto the glass houses then I will have to pay careful attention to the moisture levels since a potful with this much growth will quickly use the moisture up in warm conditions. The plants are the best indicator of when they need water as they tend to flop when the water level is low then I need to give them a very good soaking. It is much better to let your bulbs get to this almost dry stage then give them a thorough soaking than it is to give them a little drop of water every day. I always do the watering in the morning, preferably on a bright sunny day so that the surplus moisture can evaporate and allow the foliage to dry off; I also try and avoid soaking the pots when frost is forecast. Sometimes I have no choice and the bulbs demand water, by their floppiness, even when the conditions are not ideal.



*Narcissus cantabricus*  
*foliosus*

Long after the first flowers opened, this group of *Narcissus cantabricus foliosus* is still looking very fresh with more buds still to open. Notice the long elegant funnel shaped tube when you view the flower from the side, this is quite different from the shape of *N. romieuxii* which is narrow at the base and flares open much more abruptly.



Narcissus with split corona

One thing I have noticed this year is that I have far more narcissus romieuxii types with split coronas, see the extreme form of this on the left, and also the mutation of the filament and stamen where they become petaloid as on the right. These bulbs have not exhibited this mutation before and I can only think that it is down to some cultural condition almost certainly caused by our climate and the flowers should be perfectly normal next year.



Narcissus to sort out

No matter how hard I try and keep the pots of clones pure I sometimes get into a bit of a muddle and interlopers get in and increase. This is a pot of bulbs that should be *N. albidus* but a vigorous *romieuxii* has taken up residence. I received it a few years back from a generous friend who is also a very experienced bulb grower and it is good to see

that they also suffer from interlopers. In the next week or two, before the flowers fade, I will carefully empty the pot out and separate out the two while I can still recognise them. The thing is that I will not end up with two pots but three. One pot for *albidus*, one for *romieuxii* and another one for all the unflowered bulbs that I will not be able to separate until another year when they reach flowering size.



*Narcissus* 'Craigton Gem'

As you know I make a lot of use of grey card for the background when photographing plants but the effect is not always just what I want. I often take a picture with and without the card and these pictures illustrate the different effects you get. On the left the grey card removes any distraction and clutter from the background and allows the eye to concentrate on the flowers but the picture on the right without the card allows some back light to illuminate the flowers and shows off better the crystalline like structure of the corona. Both are useful and desirable and it is one of the big advantages of digital photography that I do not have to pay for film and can afford to take several variations of a picture to best serve my needs.

In the frit house things are stirring and you can see here that, as I have always maintained, if your frit seedlings were sown by the optimum time, September/October, then they will germinate at the same time as the mature bulbs of the species starts to push its growth upwards.



*Fritillaria argolica* seedlings

Here is a pot of *Fritillaria argolica* and you can see the seedlings germinating just as the first leaves of older bulbs are appearing. Another interesting observation is that the leaves of the non flowering sized bulbs appear just before the flowering sized shoots emerge through the gravel. If you are new to the bulb log: I sometimes sow my seeds back into the same pot as the parent bulbs to save space, something we ran out of years ago.



*Fritillaria chitralensis* and seedlings

The longer I grow and study bulbs the more I find them both fascinating and mystifying. I have always said that although we get seed set on our *Fritillaria chitralensis* which looks like good viable seed, the germination rate has been abysmal. Luckily, with it being such a rare bulb, I have never emptied out any of the un-germinated *F. chitralensis* seed pots and now I have discovered that this 7cm pot of seeds that I received and sowed in September 2000 is now germinating. How do I explain that? I have not the faintest idea but I will make very sure that I look after all the seed pots that I have sown from our plant in the last 4 or so years in the hope that they may also eventually germinate.



Mark Smyth, Northern Irish Galanthophile and Maggi Young

Ok, I have to come out of the closet and admit that despite all my best efforts to suggest otherwise, I do like and grow snowdrops.



*Galanthus woronowii* small form

It was I who asked Mark Smyth over to speak to the Aberdeen Group on *Galanthus* and when he arrived to stay with us he found me out, as he saw a good number of pots of snowdrops in our frames and many noses peeping through the garden where they are a still bit away from flowering. This did not stop me heckling from the back of the lecture as I think it is one of my purposes in life to poke fun at all Galanthophiles.



Pots of snow drops

As Mark was staying for a few days one of the things we did was to trawl some of the local garden centres to see what they were offering in the way of snow drops and we were not disappointed. Above is a small collection we bought after turning over and squeezing every single flower on offer to prise the petals apart so we could view the wee green markings on the inside.



Galanthus nivalis ? I do not think so!

They were all labelled Galanthus nivalis: I know I do not know the millions of cultivars that there are but I do know the species and these are not Galanthus nivalis they are mainly Galanthus elwesii with an occasional G. woronowii thrown in. Apart from the name being wrong I find the statement 'Grown on a British Nursery' a bit hard to believe, perhaps they were potted up and brought into leaf in a British Nursery but that is probably the extent of it. If any one knows different then I would love to be proved wrong.



Galanthus sad face

Anyway for about fifteen minutes I found myself squeezing the petals to peer into the wee green markings to see if I could work out what all the fuss is about and on this occasion I found this sad face staring back at me – may be there is something to this!



Galanthus montage

After I recovered my senses I took a number of pictures and here is a montage showing a small selection of the variation that can be found in *Galanthus elwesii* bought for £1.48 for a pot of 3 to 5 bulbs and not tens of pounds for a single bulb given a cultivar name. I think we got a nice range as we selected mostly for shape, size and posture of the flowers.