



BULB LOG.....20-04-2007

Life is very hectic at the moment as I have just returned from Shetland where I was setting up and attending the opening of my latest exhibition of prints. Tomorrow I leave for Dublin where I am giving a talk, 'Bulb Log Live' on Thursday evening to the AGS at Glasnevin Botanic Garden.



Garden view

All the time I have been away the weather in Aberdeen has been glorious with very hot temperatures which has resulted in one of the best flowering years for the erythroniums that I can remember. So often our weather in April is cold and wet and some years the erythroniums only get to reflex their flowers in brief spells of bright warm conditions. This year is the complete opposite as they are fully reflexed every day, the down side is that the unseasonal heat is causing them to wither much more quickly, but not before they have given me immense pleasure at the sight of them in full flower. So far this year, despite what every one has been saying about an early season, all the bulbs that we grow have flowered at almost exactly the same time as they have for the past four years. With this hot spell the erythroniums are now peaking one or two weeks earlier than the previous few years.



Erythronium revolutum x2

Every year I sow masses of erythronium seeds and as a result we have many variations of the beautiful pink *Erythronium revolutum*. The main differences are in the intensity of the pink of the flowers and the variation of the markings on the leaves.



Erythronium revolutum type 2

One *Erythronium revolutum*, that I will call type 2, stands out as it has a very different shape to the flower. The petals reflex much closer to the base giving it more of a shooting star shape than the majority of the other *revolutum*s I have seen. The original plants were raised from wild collected seed and this feature has been passed on through the seed line and I believe that it could justify sub-specific status.



Multi headed *Erythronium revolutum*

I have never noticed so many multi headed *Erythronium revolutum* in our garden as I have this year – some have three flowers per stem. I do not think that I have just not noticed before, as I pay very careful attention every year looking at each flower for variations - I wonder if it is something to do with the conditions last year when the buds were forming?



Naturalising Erythronium bed

In the bed below one with rhododendrons where I am letting the erythroniums self seed, the 'White Beauty' are now coming out. Looking at this planting I think I will move the White Beauties or at least split them up as I think the large clumps are spoiling the more natural effect. To retain the white I will sow more *E. oregonum* and *E. californicum* that do not increase so rapidly by clumping.



Erythronium 'Craigton Cover Girl'

I am not saying that an erythronium that increases and flowers so freely is not desirable, quite the opposite: these are the erythroniums that are highly desirable for garden use. I selected the hybrid Erythronium 'Craigton Cover Girl' for that very reason – it has a good pink flower and it increases steadily to form clumps.



Erythronium revolutum hybrid

In the foreground of the left hand picture is a sister seedling to 'Craigton Cover Girl' which is in the back ground. 'Craigton Cover Girl' is taller, has multiple flowers to a stem and increases well. The flowers of the sister seedling, in the foreground and the right hand picture looks very similar to 'Craigton Cover Girl' but it is shorter only has a single flower per stem and is slow to increase.



Erythronium 'Ruapuna Dawn'

I was very pleased to receive a similar pink hybrid Erythronium 'Ruapuna Dawn' from Jean Wyllie the other year to compare with 'Craigton Cover Girl'. Erythronium 'Ruapuna Dawn' was raised and distributed in New Zealand by a grower of many fine plants, Joan Whillans. It is obviously of similar parentage to 'Craigton Cover Girl' but very

distinct in that it has paler pink flowers and a darker more distinct pattern to the leaves. When growing well it also has multiple flowers to a stem. I am delighted to have this fine hybrid in my garden.



Erythronium 'Craigton Cream'

Erythronium 'Craigton Cream' is another of my hybrids whose best feature is its rate on increase. It very quickly forms good sized clumps and like 'White Beauty' is best divided very three to five years – to maximise increase, lift and split every year.



Susannah, Minnehaha (Mini Ha Ha) and 'Craigton Cover Girl'

A group of hybrids are shown, above, growing in deep polystyrene boxes so I can easily split them every year and so maximise the rate of increase, from the left the yellow E. Susannah , white E. Minnehaha and the pink one is 'Craigton Cover Girl'.



Erythronium 'Joanna'

Erythronium 'Joanna' is a hybrid between *E. tuolumnense* and *revolutum* and as ghastly as the combination of a yellow and a pink flower sounds, this one works. It has just a hint of pink to the reverse of the petals that does blend nicely into the yellow. Named after one of John Amand's daughters this hybrid was being raised in numbers on a Dutch nursery but one year disaster struck and they lost the entire stock. It now survives in John's garden and our garden and a few lucky buyers that had the vision to grab it when it made a brief appearance in one of his catalogues. Hopefully, along with the other hybrids above, it will increase and become more widely available in years to come.



Erythronium multiscapoideum and *citrinum*

A quick look at a few species as I must get on with my preparations to go to Dublin. *Erythronium multiscapoideum* and *citrinum*, above, both raised from JCA (Archibald) seed.

The *Erythronium multiscapoideum* is a very nice form with an attractive narrow leaf collected North of Magalia in Butte Co. The *citrinum* likewise has a very well marked leaf and was collected from coniferous woodland near Gasquet in Del Norte Co.



Erythronium multiscapoideum, two flowers

Another form of *Erythronium multiscapoideum* again raised from JCA seed collected in Butte Co., this time south of Pugula, this is a bigger form than the above and is the one called *E. 'cliftonii'*. Different forms you would say looking at the markings - as I thought until I checked and discovered that both of these flowers were rising from the same scape.



Erythronium multiscapoideum, one scape

This is an excellent example of why we must not build too much taxonomic strength on the brown markings seen on erythronium flowers when two flowers from the same bulb can vary like this.



The west drive

I have been cultivating the gravel areas in one of our drives for many years now and in the late spring and summer it is a sheet of pink and purple *Geranium sanguinum* flowers. For the last several years I have been throwing bulb seeds into the gravel, it is impossible to dig so plants can only be established by seeding. The results are now starting to pay off as many bulbs are now flowering and seeding themselves back into the gravel giving us interest before the geraniums get going.



The west drive 2

Erythroniums, Fritillaria, Muscari , Eranthis , Crocus and Cyclamen have all been successfully established.

I must go and get ready for my Dublin trip now.....