



BULB LOG 09 20th February 2008



Crocus nubigena and *melantherus*

First I have to a confession to make – soon after last week’s bulb log appeared I received an e-mail from one of the forum’s Crocus experts, Thomas Huber, asking if this was a spring flowering form of *Crocus biflorus melantherus*? Thomas was kind enough to spare my blushes by doing it privately but I am always the first to own up to my mistakes and yes I made a mistake. Was I still suffering from the jet lag? No it was just a simple slip. As I was labelling the picture I thought *Crocus biflorus* with black anthers that is *melantherus* – but of course that flowers in the autumn. The one I showed last week is ssp *nubigena* – I was the one who had my head in the clouds. This just shows how easy it is to make a simple mistake with a plant name and if I had been collecting seeds to send to an exchange then that mistake would have perpetuated.



Crocus cvijicii

I missed most of the flowers on our *Crocus cvijicii* when I was in New Zealand but one or two late ones, like the one above in the new small sand bed, are appearing around the garden. I know many of you have been complaining on the forum that you purchased this lovely crocus recently from a UK supplier only to discover when it flowered that it was another species altogether. My experiences show that it is all too easy to make a simple slip with a name so I say - do not be too hard on bulb sellers. However there is a difference between a simple slip and not taking due care to ensure your stock is correct especially with the more

expensive bulbs. I have only ever managed to increase *Crocus cvijicii* by seed so I would doubt if it will ever be available in the mass market. I know many bulb sellers ‘buy in stock’ and I believe that they should have some way to verify that the material is true to name such as growing it on for a year especially when it is expensive.



Crocus hybrids

When it comes to the mass plantings of *Crocus* hybrids, many of which are so cheap to buy, it does not matter so much if you get the wrong cultivar as long as some one keeps good records of the original stock so we have a reference to trace and verify names.



Crocus tommasinianus* and *sieberi* *atticus

We have lots of plantings of crocus that are self seeding and all sorts of variations are appearing – especially *Crocus tommasinianus*.



Crocus tommasinianus

Some of these are very attractive and could be singled out to get a name – but many will be just like cultivars that are already named. So the answer is try hard to verify all your own plants (and do this on a regular basis, as labels can and will get mixed up) especially if you intend sending seed to an exchange or distributing them.



Crocus x jessopae and pestalozzae white

Among the many crocus in flower in the bulb house are *Crocus x jessopae* (a plant of uncertain origin that is considered by most people to be a hybrid) and a tiny white form of *C. pestalozzae* that I got from Tony Goode.

**Leucojum vernum
'Podpolozje'**

There have been rumours spreading that I have contracted 'white fever'. I do admit to having been seen at several snow drop sites recently but this is a part of my ongoing research into everything bulbous - I am still a committed 'LeucoJock'!! This is a very good form of *Leucojum vernum* named 'Podpolozje' I am showing here to illustrate the variation in the colour of the tips. *Leucojum vernum* var *carpathicum* is distinguished by having yellow rather than green tips to the petals but this colour can vary considerably from season to season and from plant to plant.



***Leucojum vernum* 'Podpolozje'**

The flowers in the picture above are of exactly the same clone growing in the same clump and you can see the difference there is. I have often seen colour variation on the tips of the same flower with one side being yellow and the other green - that is why *carpathicum* has only varietal status. Whenever we talk of plant names we usually end up complaining about the taxonomists who continually rename our beloved plants - do you know that *Galanthus*, *Leucojum*, *Narcissus*, etc are all now in the *Alliaceae*?



Amana edulis

Another plant that is either in its own genera or lumped into Tulipa is *Amana edulis*- it is a very pretty little plant that hails from Japan and China.



Iris Katharine Hodgkin and Narcissus cyclamineus

Many bulbs are appearing around the garden now with each bright warm day bringing another explosion of flowers. Iris 'Katharine Hodgkin' is one of the best dwarf irises for the garden and it is much tougher than it looks. I am concerned with the number that I see that around that have very dark blue streaks in the flowers – I think that is down to a virus and luckily we have not seen it on any of ours. *Narcissus cyclamineus* is another brilliant bulb for the rock garden and still one of my favourites even in its new family – Alliaceae.

Iris histrioides

Iris histrioides forms used to be much more common than they are just now. At one time they were widely available in the trade but then they just disappeared from the market. Over the last several years I have managed to get hold of some good clean plants and am working at building them up in our garden.



Eranthis hyemalis

The aconites are wonderful and contrast so well with the other spring bulbs Eranthis hyemalis seeds happily around our garden.



Eranthis pushing through

I just love the way the wee clumps push up through the leaf litter.

Eranthis 'Guinea Gold'

A close look into the flowers of Eranthis 'Guinea Gold' reveals how intricate the structure is Erythronium caucasicum and dens canis And my first Erythroniums are in flower.



Erythronium caucasicum and

an early flowering form of E.dens canis. I raised it from seed I got from Brain Wilson who has a clump that always flowered well ahead of any of mine and this habit has passed on to these seedlings.