



BULB LOG 3130th July 2008



Cyclamen purpurascens

Cyclamen purpurascens is always the first of the cyclamen to flower for us, in fact it is the first bulb to flower in the summer and it always makes me think that autumn is not far away - I do hope there is a lot more fine weather still to come.



Cyclamen purpurascens
compact
I especially like this compact form that has appeared as a self sown seedling. I should mention that *Cyclamen purpurascens* has to my nose one of the finest scents ever – a good sniff fills your being with a sense of calm – I wish I could bottle it I would make a fortune. As you will notice all our *Cyclamen purpurascens* have plain green leaves, I must try and get some

seed of the forms with the marked leaves.



Cyclamen corm

Seeing the purpurascens in flower also serves as a reminder to me that if I have not re-potted the cyclamen it is high time I got on with it. I do not grow many cyclamen in pots simply because I do not have enough space under glass for everything I would like to be growing. For the last several years I have been trying to establish as many species as I can in the open garden, mostly by the hit and miss process of sowing as much seed as I can in a variety of habitats around the garden in the hope that some will find the conditions to their liking – more on that in future bulb logs. This is the only *Cyclamen coum* that I still have in a pot and I start by tipping off the deep layer of gravel which makes it easier to remove the remains of the leaves and the flowers stems complete with seed capsules.



Cyclamen corm corm

If you look at the corm you will see that it still has live roots and it is advantageous to the plant to keep these from drying off - that is why I like to repot them now and then I will give them a soaking . If these roots do dry off the corm will survive but it will have to grow a new set of roots before it can perform to its best - keeping the roots alive gives it a head start.



Cyclamen coum seeds

This is a nice dark coloured form with good sized flowers so I will sow the seeds in a pot.



Sowing Cyclamen coum seeds

There has been a lot of research into how to sow cyclamen seeds and how to treat them to optimise germination; , I am not a cyclamen specialist but I have my own method. One of the methods written about is the requirement of darkness before germination will occur – I provide this by sowing the seeds half way down a pot. Cyclamen seeds are coated in a sticky substance to encourage ants to distribute them and like other bulbous seed that is ant distributed it has evolved to germinate well if buried under ground – so that is just what I do. Once sown the pot is placed in an open plunge frame and left uncovered until germination occurs.

Cyclamen cyprium seedlings

Here are a cluster of *Cyclamen cyprium* seedlings growing happily at the depth that I sowed the seeds at – when I repot them up into individual pots I will make sure that the corms are planted at a similar depth and not sitting on the surface.



Cyclamen mirabile corm

Here is a *Cyclamen mirabile* corm which shows even more pronounced roots which, provided they do not get too hot and dry, will survive through the dormant season to give the plant a good start into growth. If I lose these roots the first task the corm will have to do is grow a new set of roots and this takes both time and energy away from the above ground growth of leaves and flowers.



Cyclamen graecum corm

Cyclamen graecum corms also have fat roots that do not die back in the summer provided some moisture is available and it is not too hot – not a problem in Aberdeen.



Cyclamen graecum potted

I do not plant all cyclamen corms deeply – plants that require a good summer temperature to ripen the buds and produce flowers like this Cyclamen graecum get planted on the surface of the compost and are just surrounded and covered lightly with a thin layer of gravel. Having said that I still struggle to get many flowers on Cyclamen graecum growing them this far north.



Cyclamen persicum repotted

I do the same with *Cyclamen persicum* another plant that comes from a hot climate but at least I can flower this species on a regular basis.



Cyclamen persicum corm and friends

As I mentioned last week I often recycle my potting compost and here is a good example of why I do not reuse it for the same or similar genera. A number of *Fritillaria pontica* bulbs have appeared growing happily with this *Cyclamen persicum* corm – there must have been rice grains left in the reused compost. I can tell that they are *F. pontica* by the strange antler like growths that appear on the top of the bulbs.



Cyclamen africanum corm

This is a good sized *Cyclamen africanum* corm grown from seed that I got from Sandy Leven's multi Forrest Medal winning plant – notice how the roots appear from all over the corm. Strictly speaking to fall into the definition of a corm the roots should all appear from the base but as I have discussed before these wonderful plants pay little heed to man's desire to pigeon hole everything. They just do not follow the rules and so this corm could also be a tuber – with roots emerging all over the surface – or it could be a corm and a tuber with roots coming from the base and the top!!



Muscari macrocarpum

Some other bulbs also have roots that live through the dormancy and are best preserved for good strong growth and flowering. One of those is *Muscari macrocarpum* and I always take great care so that I do not damage these fragile roots and that is the reason that I only replot this plant every two or three years.



Demonstration troughs

Here is a sneaky preview. I have been busy making and planting some small demonstration troughs that are easy to carry for a Trough Workshop Sandy Leven and I am giving in the Explorers Garden at Pitlochry on Saturday 23 August. We intend to cover all aspects of making and planting up troughs both of the fish box type and easily made cement based ones. It is open to Members and non Members but places are limited and must be booked in advance –there is an advert on the back of the latest Rock Garden, if you want more information contact me.