



BULB LOG 37 .....10<sup>th</sup> September 2008



**Sternbergia leaves**  
The leaves on these Sternbergia bulbs are responding to last weeks storm already. I suspect that the roots are also extending into the moist compost and I hope that I will get at least a few flowers soon. In an attempt to improve my flowering record with Sternbergia I

have planted some of the bulbs very near to the surface – this also contributes to the very early appearance of these leaves. My reasoning for this is that it appears that Sternbergia require a good warm ripening period to enable the flower buds to develop and by planting near the surface they will be warmer. I will watch them carefully over the next year and it will be especially interesting to see the shape of the bulb at repotting time which will indicate if it is happy at this shallow depth.



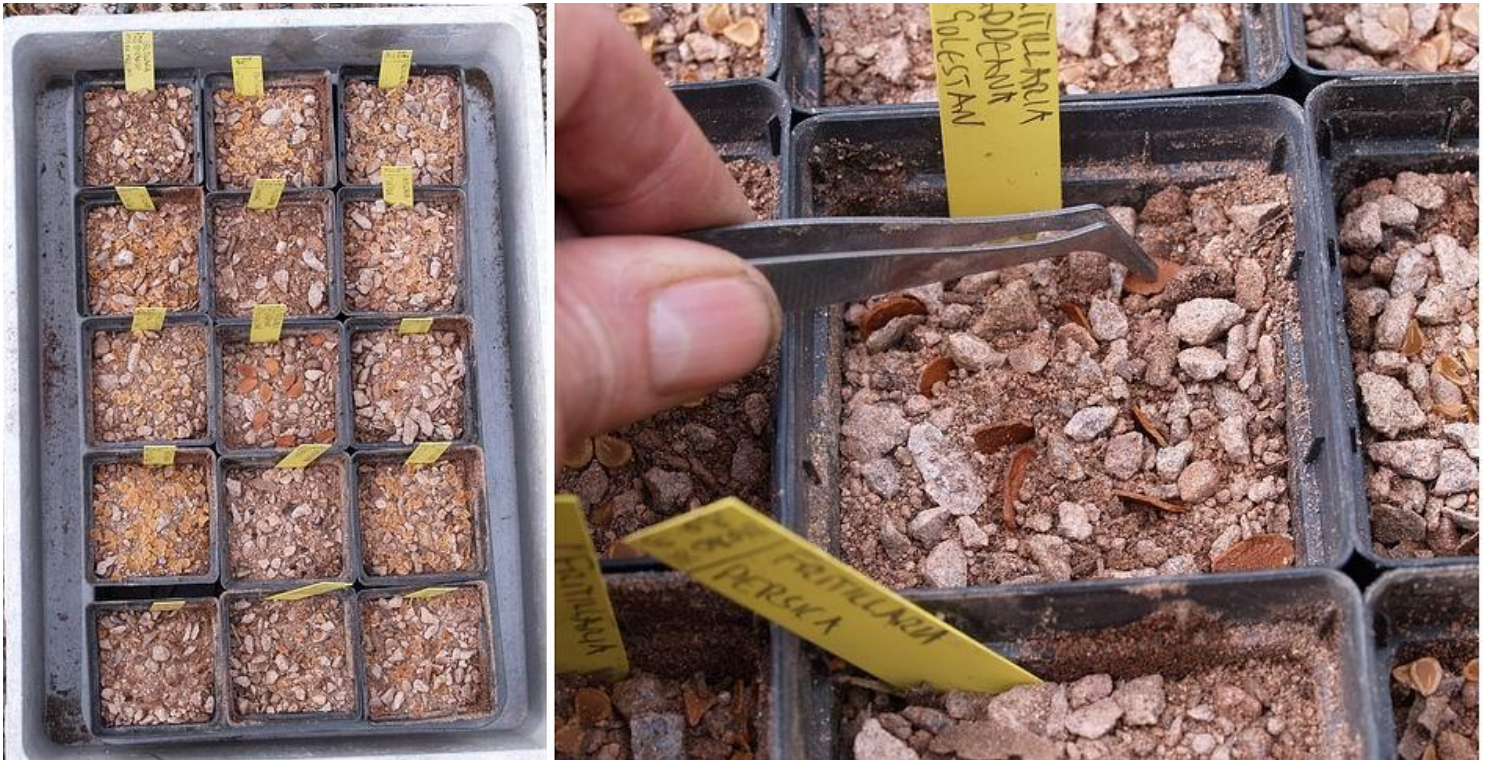
**Frit house**

As I mentioned last week I have not watered the Frit house as they tend to come into growth that bit later than Crocus and Narcissus, nor have I had time to re-pot many of them. Over the next few weeks I will tidy away all the remains of the stems and leaves before I apply their first storm towards the end of the month. I am not intending adding any additional feed to the pots that have not been replanted because I suspect that there will be enough nitrogen and phosphorous available in the bone meal applied last year. I will however watch the new growth very carefully for signs of any lack of nutrient and if I think they are deprived I will apply a low nitrogen tomato type liquid feed. I will of course be applying my usual potash feeds in the spring .



### **Fritillaria seeds**

While I am happy to delay the storm for the fritillaria bulbs this is the optimum time to sow all the bulb seeds that I have been storing.



### **Sowing Fritillaria seeds**

I sow Fritillaria seeds in the conventional way by scattering them on the surface of the compost and covering them with one to two centimetres of gravel, the pots are then stood outside to take the weather.



### **Narcissus seeds**

I have also sowed all my own saved Narcissus seeds that I have been storing in dry sand over the summer.



### **Narcissus seed pots**

I only half fill the seed pot with compost before I sow my Narcissus seeds as I have discovered that they germinate and grow much better when the seed is buried like this. Having sown the seed I fill the pot with compost and top off with a layer of gravel as normal.

As well as sowing all the seeds that I have received from generous friends I always like to sow as much of my own seed as possible. When I first started to grow plants I was desperate to add as many new ones to our collection as I could and that is how we build up a collection and learn about the plants. However after a number of years on the acquisition trial I realised that we had built up quite a collection and the important thing now was to maintain that collection in good health and the best way to do that was to have a continual supply of seedlings coming on. I believe that as gardeners we have a responsibility to preserve and maintain the plants in our collections as it is becoming increasingly difficult to get seeds from wild sources and we never know when that source will dry up either as a result of environmental factors or legislation.



**Arisaema ciliatum seed heads**

The *Arisaema ciliatum* seed heads are so heavy that they have bent down to the ground also notice the mass of seedlings to the left of the picture.



**Roscoeae seeds**

They are *Roscoeae* seedlings self sown as I missed collecting them last year and it looks like I have missed many of them again this year. In a way this is good as it saves me time and space in the seed frames but I will have to lift and spread these young plants out in a year or two to prevent them suffering from the intense competition with each other.



### **Crocus vallicola**

I have moved a number of pots of *Crocus vallicola* from the ravages of the wet and windy weather of outside frame and found a temporary place for them under glass where I hope the dry and warmer conditions will lead to a more successful pollination.



### **Pollinating crocus**

I have been busy with my paint brush moving the pollen around from stamen to stigma but I am not the only one as the sunshine has brought out a number of hoverflies to help me.



**Crocus vallicola tips**

It is always exciting to find variation in your flowers and this Crocus vallicola has violet tips to the floral segments to match the violet lines in the centre of flower.



**Albuca shawii**

A group of the South African bulb Albuca shawii is flowering well outside where it enjoys the wet summer but I need to dry the bulbs out and store them under the bench for the cold winter – just the same treatment as I give our Rhodohypoxis. Now our stock has increased I will try a bulb or two outside and see how it fares.



**Colchicum laetum**

Under the shade of a tree we have some flowers on one of the plants we got with the name of Colchicum laetum – there seem to be a number of taxa circulating under this name. One of the ongoing problems in gardens is that they keep on growing – you wait patiently for your garden to achieve that desired state of maturity only to discover that it only lasts for a year or two at most before it needs major intervention of some kind. In our case it is controlling the trees and shrubs so we do not disappear into a woodland.



**Catoneaster tree**

The future of this Catoneaster tree is under review just now as we consider how its removal would change the structure of the garden.

## Acer 'Crimson King'

The other option we have is to remove this Acer 'Crimson King' on the right of the picture but as we have only one 'Crimson King' and a number of Catoneasters I think if we decide to remove a tree then it is an easy decision.



## Save the tree

Here is another view showing the 'Crimson King' on the left and the Catoneaster is to the right of it behind an Acer palmatum.





**Crocus speciosus buds**

The state of these poor battered *Crocus speciosus* buds is typical of what the low light and wet windy weather does to some of the autumn flowering crocus.



**Crocus speciosus flowers**

However later in the day the sun comes out and is in a position to shine through the tree canopy and reach the crocus flowers that welcome the warm light by opening their flowers. It was not just me that noticed this beautiful display as there were a number of hover flies swarming around and pollinating as well.