



BULB LOG 2922nd July 2009

Have you ever noticed how one job in the garden often leads to another, which leads to another - just like the domino effect? You start one job in the morning and by night you have finished another apparently unrelated task with the original task unfinished?



Corydalis Seedling

This is one of the many Corydalis seedlings that have grown in the gravel area between the paving slabs. I am not yet sure which Corydalis it is; I suspect it may be *C. mairei* or a hybrid of that species.



Gravel Area

The various areas of river-gravel are a very fruitful place for self sown seedlings most of which we leave until they are almost flowering size before we decide if they need to be moved. However the Corydalis seedling above had to be shifted and the folded cover in the foreground gives a clue as to why it needs moved now.



Lychnis & Aquilegia

I also had to cut all the seed heads off the Lychnis and Aquilegia plants that have naturalised into one area of the gravel. The gravel areas are such good seed areas that we no longer need collect and sow seeds of many Meconopsis and Primulas into pots they do it themselves directly into these areas.



Shredder

Now you can see why I needed to lift the Corydalis to prevent it from being damaged by the ground sheet. This is the area where I set up our shredder. The sheet also covers the Lychnis and Aquilegia but the main reason that I wanted to remove their seed heads was that we have enough of them already and I do not want more seeding around so I may as well shred them.



Cutting out Shrubs

Now the reason that I needed to get my shredder out was that we had decided to remove a few of the older shrubs to open up some space. A Rhododendron and a Daphne were the targets so Maggi got to work cutting all the top growth back



Shredding

This material was then moved across so that I could put it through our trusty shredder which just eats up this kind of material as quickly as I can stuff it in the hopper. The slowest bit is that the bag that collects the shreds fills up quite quickly and needs to be emptied quite often. .



Rhododendron

We were going to prune this large thirty year old Rhododendron x catawbiense back a bit but after a discussion we decided that it too could come out and that would create some space so we could move another Rhododendron that we want to shift into this bed – and so another domino falls.

Compost Heap

This is what is left of the top growth from the three large shrubs after they have been through the shredder.

I recycle all our garden waste in our compost area and when composted this type of prunings make an ideal mulch for the beds which builds up the humus content and keeps all the essential elements in the garden soil.



When the prunings are broken down like this they compost fairly quickly and within a day the heap will have heated up and within six weeks the prunings could be spread as a mulch if urgently needed.



Maggi celebrates the end of phase one the cutting back of the shrubs with a cup of coffee. Once we have finished all the moving around and replant the recovered space in this bed I will use the composted prunings to mulch it over to keep down weeds, retain moisture and return the nutrients to the ground.



Now the follow on job is that I have to remove the stumps and I have two trusty tools to help make this task easier. I used to have three, but Maggi's a bit past it 😊

On the left is an old trenching spade which is very heavy and solidly built which means that I can cut deeply into the ground severing most of the roots.

Because it is such a robust spade I can also use it as a lever to help ease the root ball out of the ground.

My other tool to aid the pulling out of stumps is a small winch which I can attach to a solid object (not Maggi, she wriggles too much) and pull the stump as I dig.





Winch

I have attached the winch to a tree taking care to protect the tree with a good layer of felt so that I will not harm the bark.



Job Done

Before long I have all the stumps removed and so that part of the task is completed.

But where did all this chain of events start and what has it to do with bulbs?

I was busy repotting the Erythroniums and as many have not been done for a few years I am completely replacing all the compost. Also, as I go through many of the seed frames, I am finding lots of pots of Erythroniums and other bulbs which now need to go into the garden.

Our garden is so full of plants that when we want to plant something we first have to find some space and that usually means something else has to go.

In this case it was some of the older shrubs that have outgrown their space and are no longer giving us best value. So they had to come out which meant I had to get the shredder out, which meant I had to lift the Corydalis seedling.....

Now I have two beds with big holes in them.



Repotting station

This is where I sit and replot the bulbs – notice the bin full of old potting compost? Well I needed some where to empty it so I thought if we remove those shrubs we will have a hole to fill in and so I pushed over the first domino that caused the chain reaction of a hard day's work.



Rhododendron seedling

I think that I am in charge of our garden and I do make most of the decisions of what is planted but nature has its way of influencing these decisions. Just like the *Corydalis* seedling that appeared in the gravel and had to be moved this *Rhododendron* seedling is also growing there and one day we will have to find space for it to grow on...and so the cycle will continue.