



BULB LOG 14.....7th April 2010



Last week after I had written the bulb log we had around 7cms of heavy wet snow fall and that was accompanied with gale force winds so I was worried about the damage to the flowering bulbs in the garden. All the bulbs with stems or leaves were bent flat by the weight of the snow which thawed away almost as quickly as it had fallen.



A day after the snow had gone most of the Hellebores and Corydalis have sat up again and are none the worse for their experience.



Corydalis 'Beth Evans'

The worst affected by the heavy snow were the most advanced in growth such as Corydalis 'Beth Evans' which had been out for a few weeks. With the longer stems they were more susceptible to damage when they became bent over and many are now kinked so they will not stand upright but they will continue to nourish the flowers. Many of the flower spikes have already turned through 90 degrees to re-orientate themselves into an upright position.



Corydalis planting - daytime

The Corydalis that were slightly less advanced and had shorter stems have bounced back and show no signs of damage from the terrible conditions of last week. This is one of my mixed plantings where I have various colour forms of Corydalis solida planted together with the creamy white Corydalis malkensis.



Colours of Corydalis – evening

This picture is of the same group of Corydalis taken under different light conditions to show how the camera sees things so differently under differing light conditions. The picture two above was taken on a cloudy day and shows relatively muted colours the one immediately above was taken in the low light of late evening. The main difference is that the day time image, even though it was taken under clouds still has a yellow tinge and the evening picture best represents the colours that I see.



Corydalis 'Craigton Red'

So the low light of very early morning or late in the evening when the sun is below the horizon is the best time to capture the intensity of these warm colours such as the deep red Corydalis 'Craigton Red'; a fact that has been appreciated by artists and photographers for years.



Narcissus cyclamineus and Crocus pelistericus under snow

At the height of the snow these flowers were completely covered over. I took this picture as the thaw was in progress and the flowers were emerging from under their cold white blanket.



Narcissus cyclamineus and Crocus pelistericus after snow

Damage report: you can see for yourselves that despite my worries that the Crocus flowers would have been snapped or damaged the majority of them have emerged with little or no damage just the odd torn petal.



Fritillaria imperialis stems in snow

We have quite a lot of different forms of *Fritillaria imperialis* around the garden and they were also bent over.



Fritillaria imperialis stems



Luckily this group bowed over part way up the stem and as the picture above, of the same group, shows they have recovered fully to an upright position. However not all the clumps fared so well – some have had their stems snapped though as seen on the right. This is not always a complete loss as there is still part of the outside skin of the stem connected and that can sometimes be enough for the growth to continue albeit at a reduced level. The growth of one group with snapped stems like this has already turned through 90 degrees and is continuing to grow towards the light. None of the snapped stems were going to flower this year and I suspect that they will now not flower next year either.



Fritillaria argolica

In the bulb house the frits have fared much better and quite a lot are coming into flower now, like this *Fritillaria argolica*. It is interesting to show the flower at different stages so you can see how it changes in appearance. At this early stage of the flower's life it is fully formed but appears to be a hanging bell shaped flower that is only slightly flared at the mouth.



Fritillaria argolica

Once the flower is fully open it is quite widely flared and you can see the possibility for confusion as detailed descriptions written at the different stages of this plant could sound quite dissimilar.



Fritillaria rhodokanakis

This seedling is confusing me a bit as I raised it from my own seed collected from our pot of *Fritillaria rhodokanakis* which is normally of a colour mixture that is not dissimilar to *Fritillaria argolica* above but this one has turned out all yellow. On checking I remember that all-yellow forms are recorded so this may well be the true species or perhaps it has crossed with some of the many other fritillaria that would have been in flower in the frit house at the same time. Whatever it turns out to be it is it is a pretty wee thing and I hope that it will oblige and increase well for me.



Fritillaria kotschyana and 'Craigton Max'

I selected and named *Fritillaria kotschyana* 'Craigton Max', above right, some years ago as it stood out from the rest of the seedlings of *F. kotschyana* both by its vigour and the mostly lime green petals. The flowers on the left are the first seedlings from 'Craigton Max' that I have grown to maturity and I can now see that they have reverted to the darker colouration of the type species and have not inherited the look of its seed parent.



Fritillaria pinardi

I am not alone in being confused by the *Fritillaria pinardi* and *carica* complex. Some forms can seem very distinct while others seem to merge in the middle and could be attributed to either species. Even the variation that I have in the many forms of *Fritillaria pinardi* that I grow could lead you to think that they are a number of different species.



Ipheion seedlings

I have a number of pots that have *Ipheion* seedlings in them as well as other bulbs – they were not sown there intentionally but are the result of my not collecting the seeds before they were shed into a number of pots. I discovered that this was not a bad thing and can be turned into an advantage. The bulbs of the *Ipheion* are easily distinguished from most other bulbs and so I have used them as surrogate bulbs to fill out a pot when I only have a few bulbs of the other species. I have written many times that I find that a pot that is crowded with bulbs always seems to fare better than a pot with just one or

two small bulbs surrounded by lots of empty compost. This accident has turned out to be a great advantage as both the *Ipheions* and the other bulbs sharing the pots have thrived plus I get the bonus of these lovely flowers.



Tecophilaea seedlings

Staying on the theme of South American bulbs that I have raised from seed taken from our own plants; this is a pot of mixed Tecophilaea seedlings which shows that there is quite a degree of variation possible.



Tecophilaea seedlings

This pot of seedlings are the results of my carefully pollination between my almost white forms of the species and as you can see I am starting to get a strain that produces mainly white flowers each with just a slight blue tone towards the ends of the petals.



Erythronium dens-canis white form

Undamaged by the recent snows this beautiful white form of *Erythronium dens-canis* is in its full glory when we get a sunny day to open its flowers. By the time a clump reaches this sort of size I should be thinking of splitting it because as it gets more congested the flowering starts to fall away and I will get lots of leaves and only a few flowers. I have made a note to split this clump at the ideal time for the plant which is when it is dormant in a few months time. However if I forget then the plant may start going backwards so I may decide to split it after the flowers have faded but before it goes entirely dormant – which is the ideal time for me to remember. You know the old and wise saying; ‘out of sight is out of mind’.



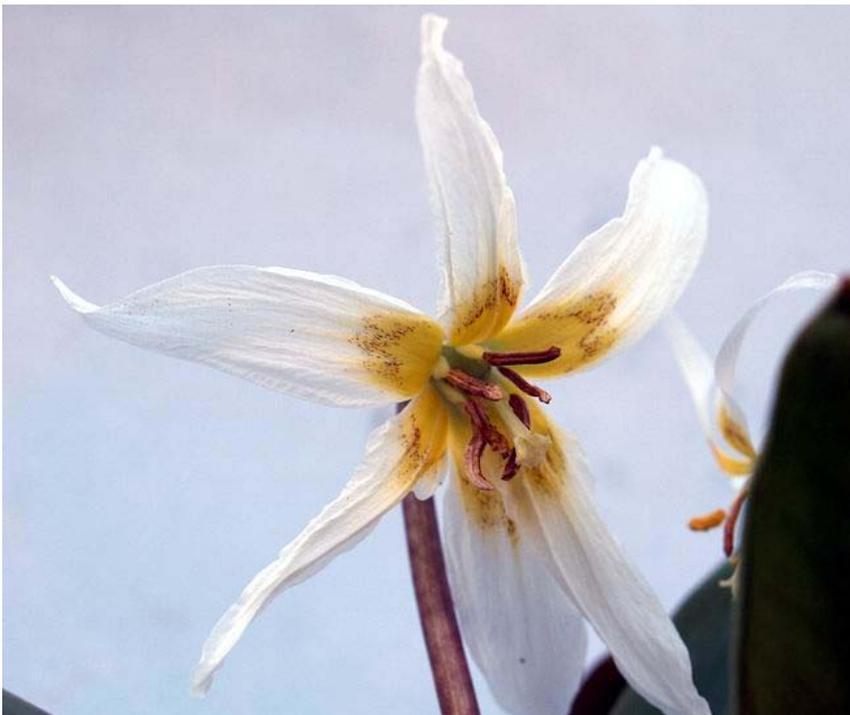
Erythronium sibericum ssp altaicum

This is a rather battered pot of the white form of *Erythronium sibericum*. This was classified as subspecies *altaicum* by Janis Ruksans as his experience showed that there were sufficient differences to justify his decision.



Erythronium sibericum ssp altaicum

One of his reasons for elevating it to a sub species is that it consistently breeds true from seed and I can confirm that the first seedlings that I have raised from this form are flowering now and they are white just like the parent. The reason these pots look a bit battered is that they were both kept in an outside plunge and I only brought them under glass when I spotted the flower shoots poking through the snow. Bringing them into warmer conditions of the glasshouse encourages their stems to grow so the flowers do not try and open underground or tight down in the leaves.



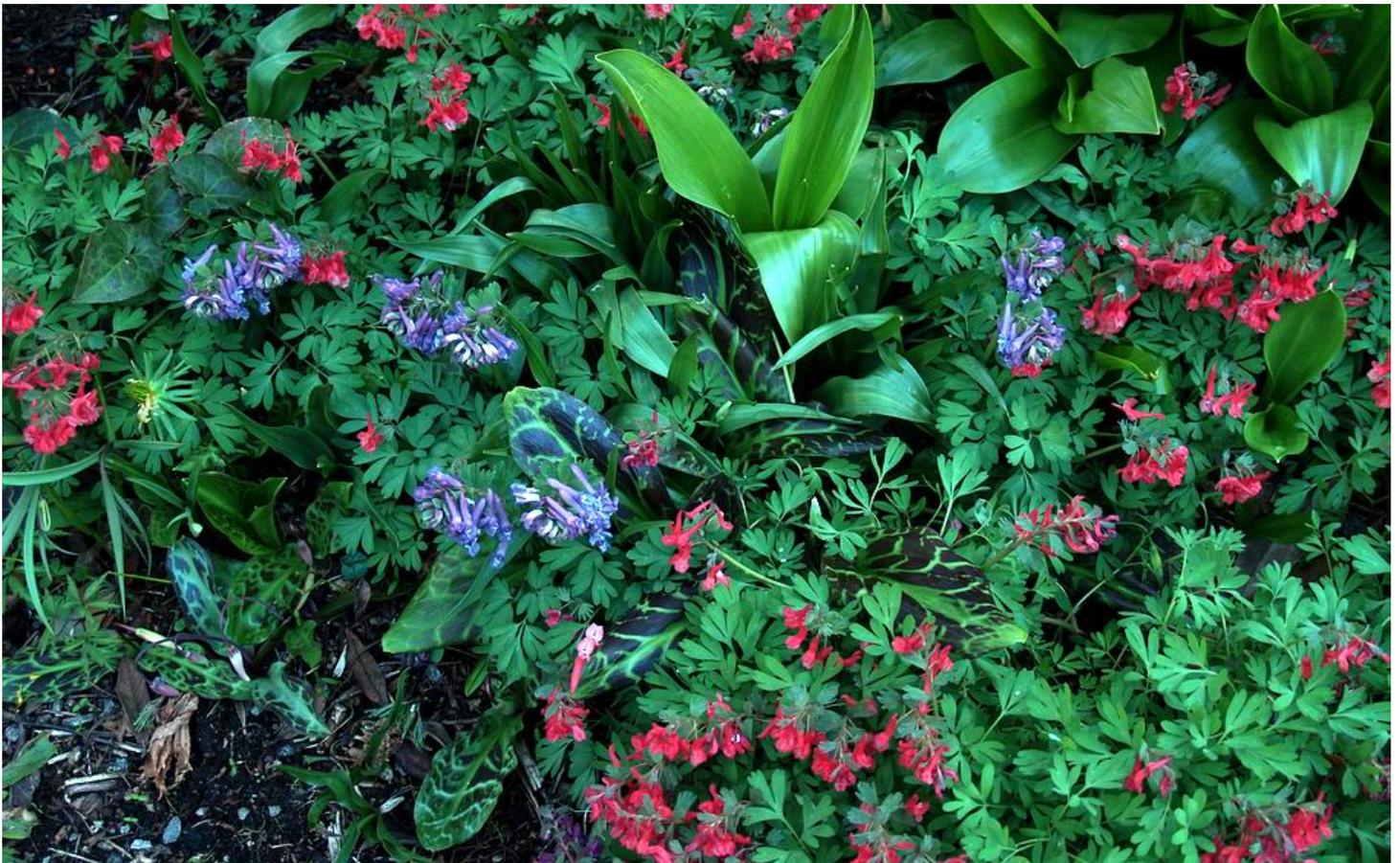
Erythronium sibericum ssp altaicum

On the left is one of my seedlings with a bulb from Janis Ruksans on the right so you can compare directly the two flowers. My seedling has more defined brown spotting but otherwise they are very similar. The brown pollen of my seedling is deceiving as it has been damaged by the cold wet conditions and is not fertile.



Erythronium japonicum

A few of the earliest flowers are opening on *Erythronium japonicum* – it would be better if they would wait a few weeks or a month until the weather improves and warms up a bit which will encourage their stems to grow as well.



Corydalis flowers and mixed leaves

I will finish off this week with a picture of my ideal planting in a garden where a blend of leaf forms showing differing colours, forms and textures at any one time is highlighted by the intense colours of the Corydalis. See how many types of leaves you can spot and identify.