



BULB LOG 18.....5th May 2010



View from trough area

Many of the plants in the wider garden are only now waking from their winter rest but as regular readers of the Bulb Log know we have been enjoying the colourful mass displays of the early flowering bulbs for months. Now it is the time for the Erythroniums to take centre stage as they come to the peak of their flowering here in Aberdeen.



Left: Looking down onto the sand plunge beds where I grow Erythroniums in mesh plunge baskets so that I can easily appraise and study them. This is where I keep many of the species when I first get them then when I have bulked them up enough I can release some to the wider garden. Often with Erythroniums the bulking up has to be done by seed as many do not oblige by offsetting at any speed.



Erythronium grandiflorum pallidum

The *Erythronium grandiflorum* variety with the pale creamy-white anthers is called var. *pallidum* and it always comes into flower a few weeks later than the other two varieties in our garden - I discussed them in bulb log 16. This species has plain green leaves but again the *pallidum* variety we grow differs from the other two in that it has a purple line running around the leaf edge. I would be interested to learn if this feature is constant in var. *pallidum* or if it is just in the stock that we have which I have raised by seed over a number of generations.



**Erythronium
grandiflorum
pallidum**

This close up picture of a flower at maturity, with ripe pollen on all six anthers, shows that there is a noticeable difference in the length of the filaments with three shorter than the other three.

It is a beautiful species that brings yellow into the range and as my stock builds up slowly I am successfully growing an increasing number in various beds around the garden.



Erythronium citrinum



Erythronium howellii

Erythronium citrinum and howellii are very closely related species that as well as looking similar grow close together in many locations in Oregon. On my visit to Oregon last year I saw E. citrinum flowering on the lower slopes running down to a river while E. howellii grew higher up the hill and was not yet through the ground – it seems to prefer the slightly higher altitude. On comparing the two species carefully I am starting to notice some subtle characteristics that help me identify them. Note in the pictures above that E. citrinum, on the left, has a more wide open flower that fully reveals these ovary and the base of the flower while the petals of E. howellii reflex some way along their length with the lower section enclosing the ovary and the flower base as the side on pictures below reveal.

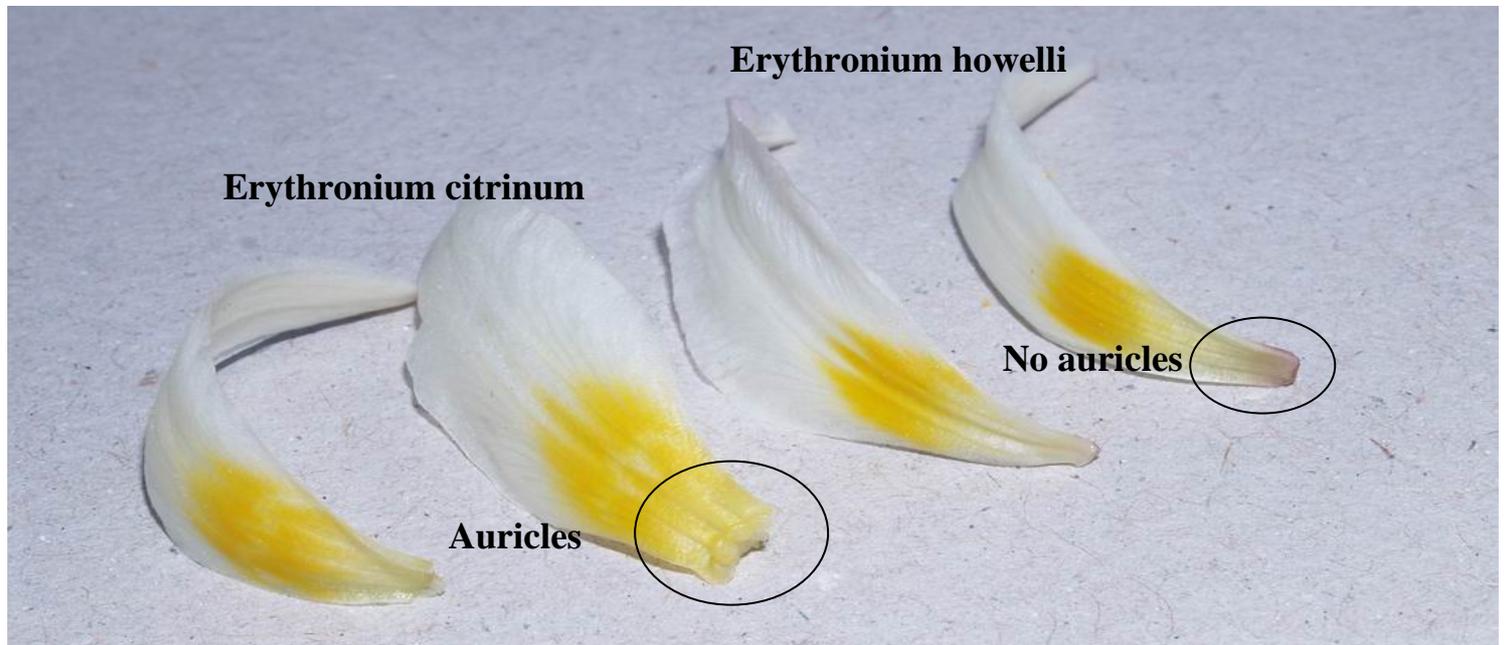


Erythronium citrinum



Erythronium howellii

The main diagnostic difference between these two species is that E. citrinum has swollen appendages (auricles) at the base of the petals while E. howellii has none – see below





Erythronium americanum

The mass of juvenile leaves in the foreground are typical of some forms of *Erythronium americanum* which spreads rapidly by stolons. There are lots of stories offering methods to make them flower; these include burying a rock underneath them and I have tried them all in the past to no effect at all. However for a number of years the clump in the foreground and the one you can see growing on the top of the dyke have both produced a significant number of flowers and I have no absolute explanation except that it has been established for around twenty years.



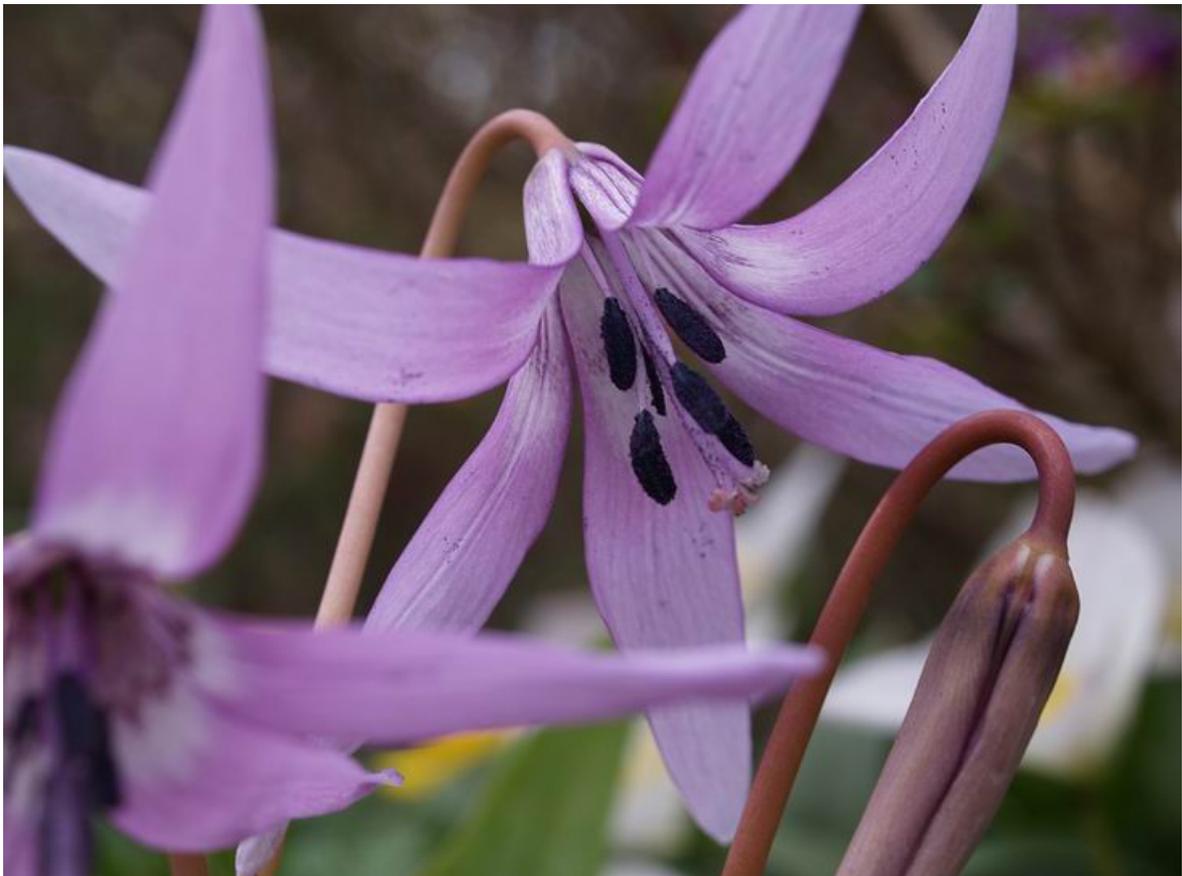
Erythronium americanum

Another interesting fact is that I did not plant this clump on the lower level – the original planting was on top of the wall and some years later this clump started to appear. I have to conclude that the stolons tunnelled there.



***Erythronium americanum* 'Craigton Flower'**

I have no problems of poor flowering with the selection of *Erythronium americanum* that I named 'Craigton Flower'. As the name suggests it flowers every year and the clump increases steadily by decent sized offsets.



Erythronium japonicum

I have another group of *Erythronium japonicum* flowering just now, some weeks after the main flowering. This is one of the many advantages of raising them from seed – you get a longer flowering period as different clones flower at different times. This detailed picture looking into the flower shows clearly that three of the six filaments are shorter – this is a constant feature which can be observed to a lesser degree in a number of species.



Erythronium japonicum

They grow happily in the same conditions as *Erythronium dens canis* and many of the other species and in the pictures above and below you can see that they are not bothered by the close competition of other bulbous plants.



Erythronium japonicum

I think that they do better planted close with other plants of similar size and vigour as they gain a shared protection from the wind by the amount of foliage that is around them. As always I have been out with my paint brush fertilising the flowers to give me the best chances of collecting some more good seed from them again this year.



Bulb Bed with Erythronium 'White Beauty'

I find that most of the Erythronium, Trillium and other bulbs that prefer woodland conditions do best when planted en-masse like this. In Scotland there is not the need to provide shade from the sun – in fact I always say that as far as that is concerned Scotland is in shade. By this I mean that even in full sun the leaves will not be burnt as the sun does not have that power at this time of year this far north. However they do need protection and shelter from the cold and often very strong winds that we get and that is where the shrubs and trees come in; they filter and reduce the strength of the wind while the mass planting affords all the plants a further degree of protection from the destructive power of the wind.



Bulb Bed with Erythronium and Trillium

Here is another example of the mass planting of 'woodland type' bulbs.



Erythronium revolutum

The pink flowers in the bed above are those of *Erythronium revolutum* or its hybrids and it is indeed a beautiful species. It is a species from Western North America that ranges from Vancouver in the north to California in the south so as you would expect from a species that covers such a geographical area there are a number of variations to be found. Above is a typical form with good dark flowers and a dark red stem.



Erythronium revolutum

This is a distinctive smaller form that reflexes much more abruptly giving it a 'shooting star' look to the flower. Compare it to the picture above where the petals emerge from the stem and run roughly parallel to the ground for around a third to a half of their length before reflexing. On the form on the left the petals reflex almost as soon as they emerge from the stem.



Erythronium revolutum

Some have pale pink flowers and many have traces of pink in at the ends of the filaments and style.



Erythronium revolutum pale anthers

This is an even paler form with creamy yellow anthers instead of the more typical golden yellow pollen – this feature is consistent in the plants I have raised from seed of this type.



Erythronium revolutum

This is a very dark form with a lot of dark pink on two thirds of the style.



Erythronium revolutum wide petals

This form is also quite dark but I show it because of it's wider than normal overlapping petals.



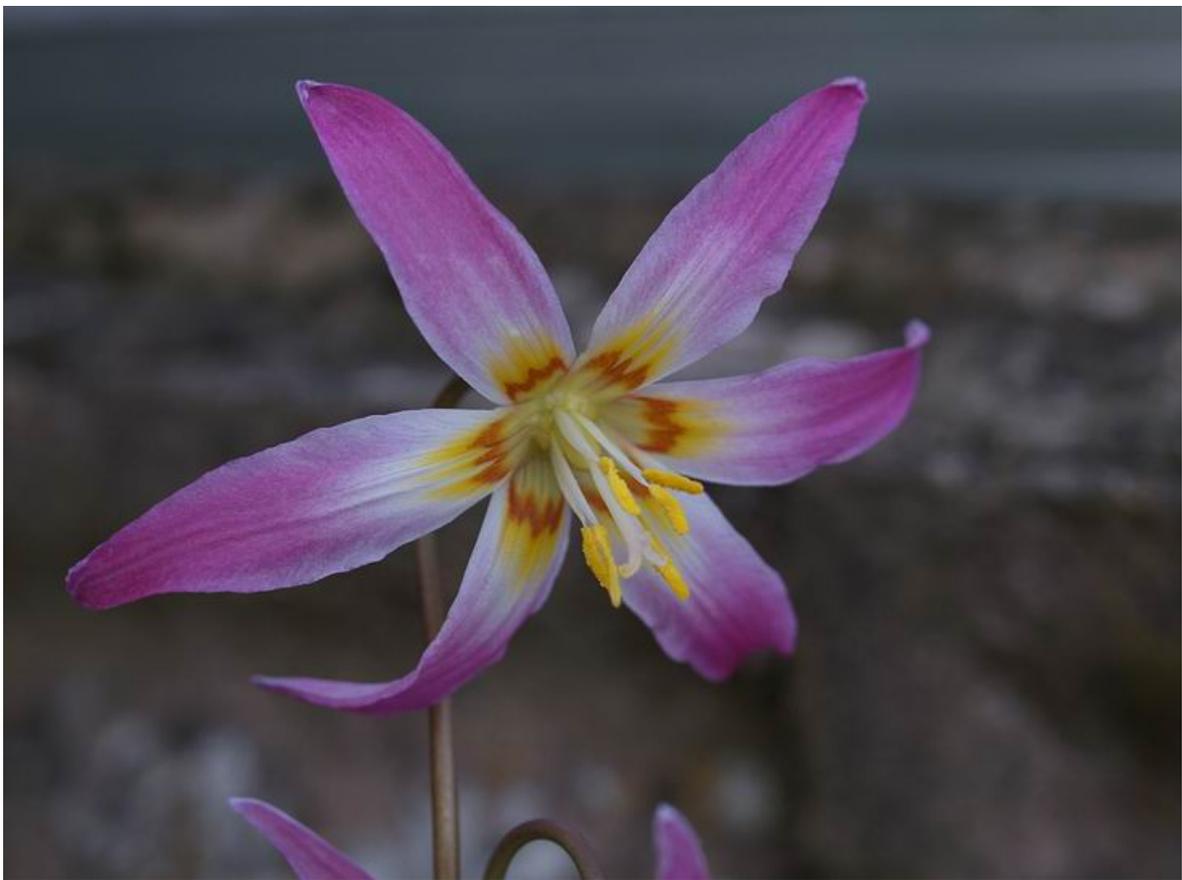
Erythronium revolutum narrow petals

Now for a narrow petal form



Erythronium ? revolutum

This is a mystery as it has very unusual markings with the dark purple zones in the centre not at all typical of any of the other *E. revolutum* flowers that I have seen. The other diagnostic features fall within the parameters of the species but I cannot help suspecting that this is a hybrid.



Erythronium revolutum hybrid

While I am unsure if the flower above is a hybrid I am sure that this one is a hybrid – the shape of the filaments gives that away. It is a good strong colour with a dramatic yellow centre that has a red zig zag and I am watching it with anticipation and hope that it will be a good increaser.



Erythronium 'Craigton Cover Girl'

We have raised many *Erythronium revolutum* hybrids all of which are pretty but I have only named one so far and that is *Erythronium* 'Craigton Cover Girl'. It is a great plant because as well as having good colour it is vigorous and increases well forming good clumps from a single bulb planting in about three to five years.



Erythronium revolutum in garden bed

I will finish off this week with two more pictures of Erythroniums growing in our garden – above is a bed where I am leaving the Erythroniums to naturalise by self seeding and below a happy community of bulbs that certainly brighten our life every time we walk around the garden in the spring time.

