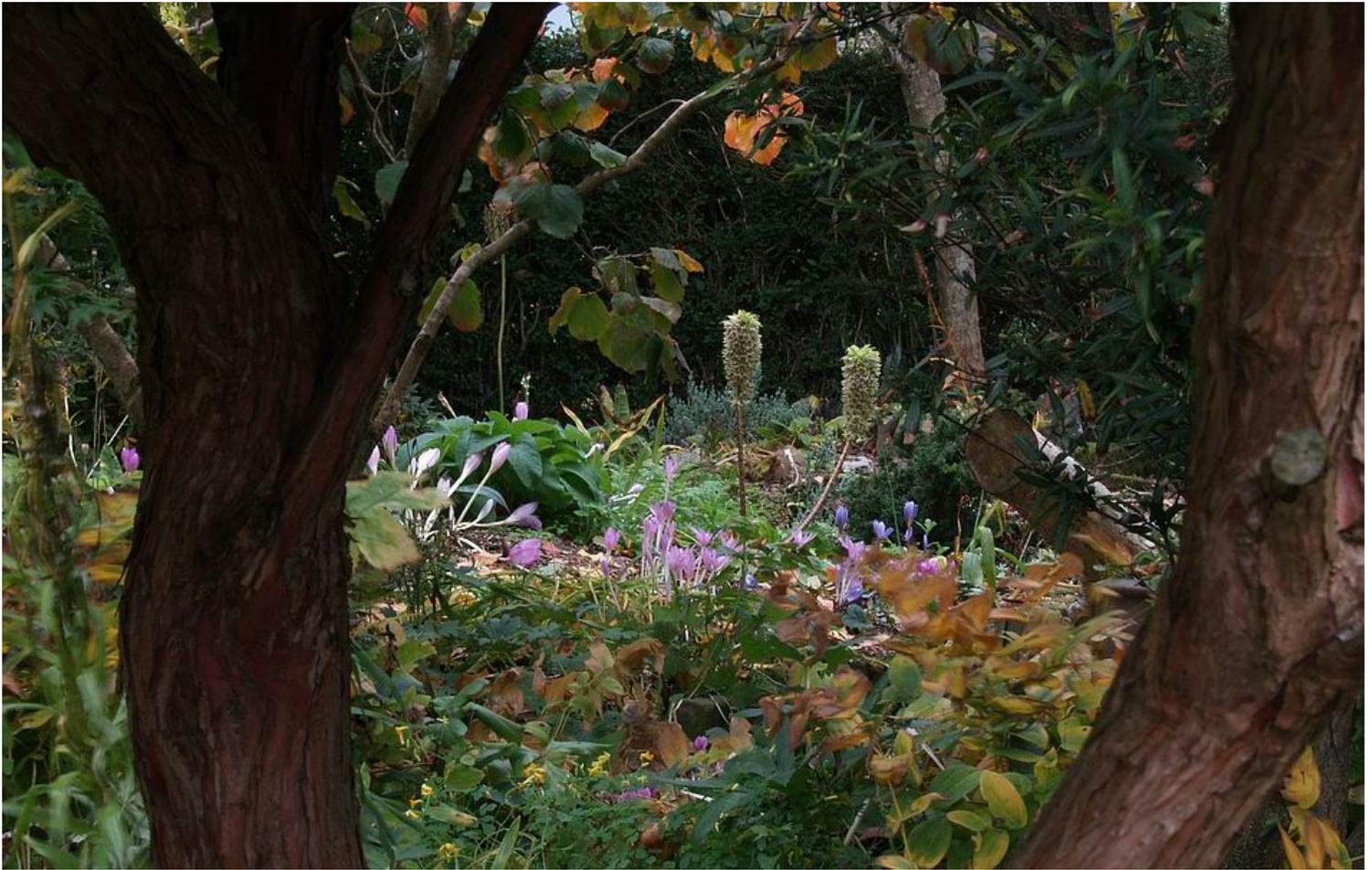




BULB LOG 41.....13th October 2010



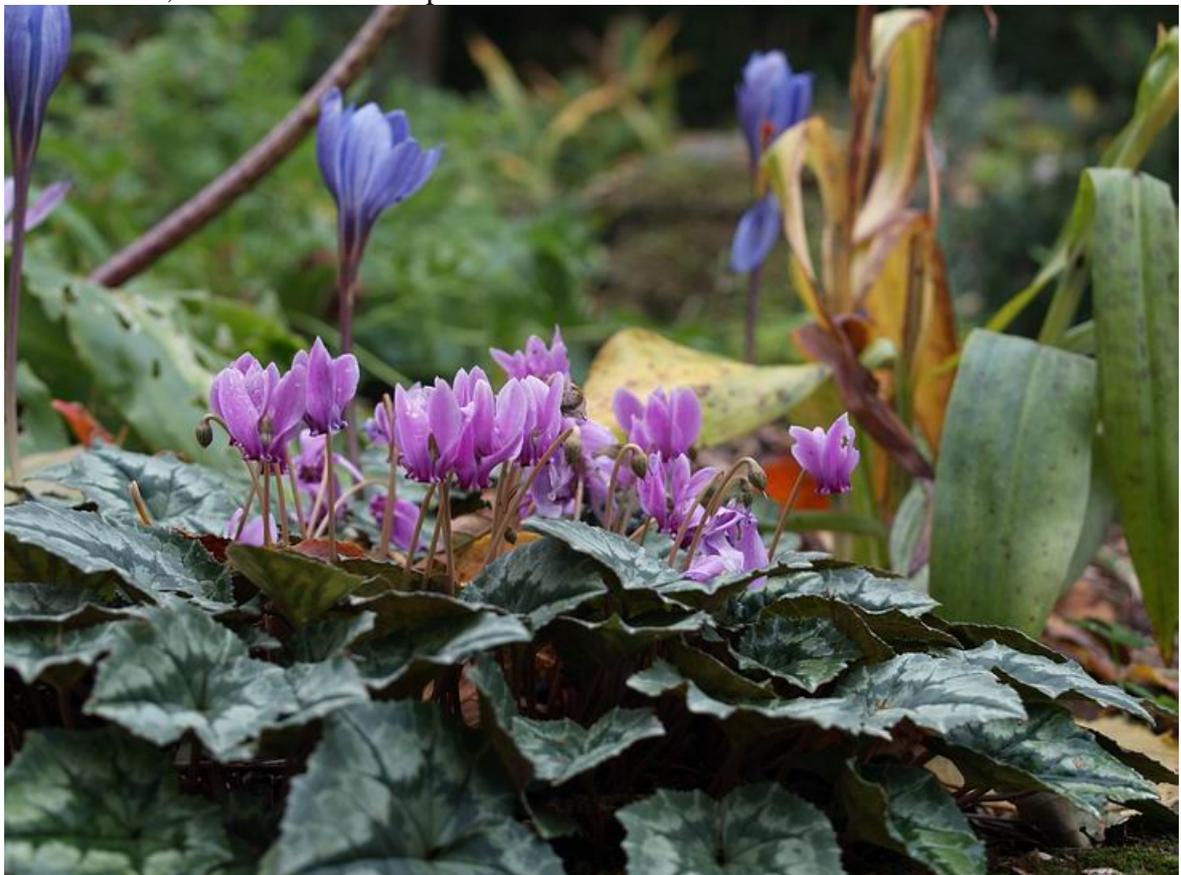
Autumn garden

Autumn is the season when so many plants are shutting down for the winter. The deciduous trees and shrubs shed their leaves but as they leave us they give a colourful bonus like a closing firework display. Herbaceous plants retreat underground leaving the dying remains of their leaves and stems as colourful reminders of their location. However as most plants are retreating the bulbs are just awakening.



Autumn flowering

Very often in gardening books and magazines the bulbs that flower in the autumn are called the late flowering bulbs but this shows an ignorance of the facts. Most bulbs form their flowers in the late spring/early summer just before they went dormant so these bulbs are flowering early. It is the bulbs that hold onto their flowers until the spring that we should call the late flowering bulbs. Crocus, Cyclamen, Colchicum and a *Eucomis bicolor* with slightly chewed – ok, well chewed leaves, can be seen in this picture.



Cyclamen hederifolium

Cyclamen hederifolium should be grown in every garden not only for its beauty but because highly variable and attractive foliage provides interest and decoration all through the winter.



Eucomis autumnale

True to its name the lovely white flower spikes of *Eucomis autumnale* grace our autumn garden.



Colchicum agrifolium

The autumn coloured leaves fallen from a *Hamamelis* make a more attractive back drop to the *Colchicum agrifolium* and *Crocus speciosus* flowers than the gravel top dressing of the bed.



Colchicum agrippinum

Colchicum agrippinum has beautifully tessellated flowers inherited from *Colchicum variegatum*, one of its parents and to make it an even more acceptable plant to those gardeners that decry all colchicums because they do not like the 'large' leaves they produce, it has relatively narrow and short leaves.



Colchicum speciosum

There are many fine forms and hybrids of *Colchicum speciosum* -a species with the classic wine goblet shape to the flower.



Colchicum speciosum album

I am often amused by the people who complain about the Colchicum leaves being too big when they grow as these very same people often have both Hostas and large Iris growing in their gardens both of which have 'big 'leaves'.



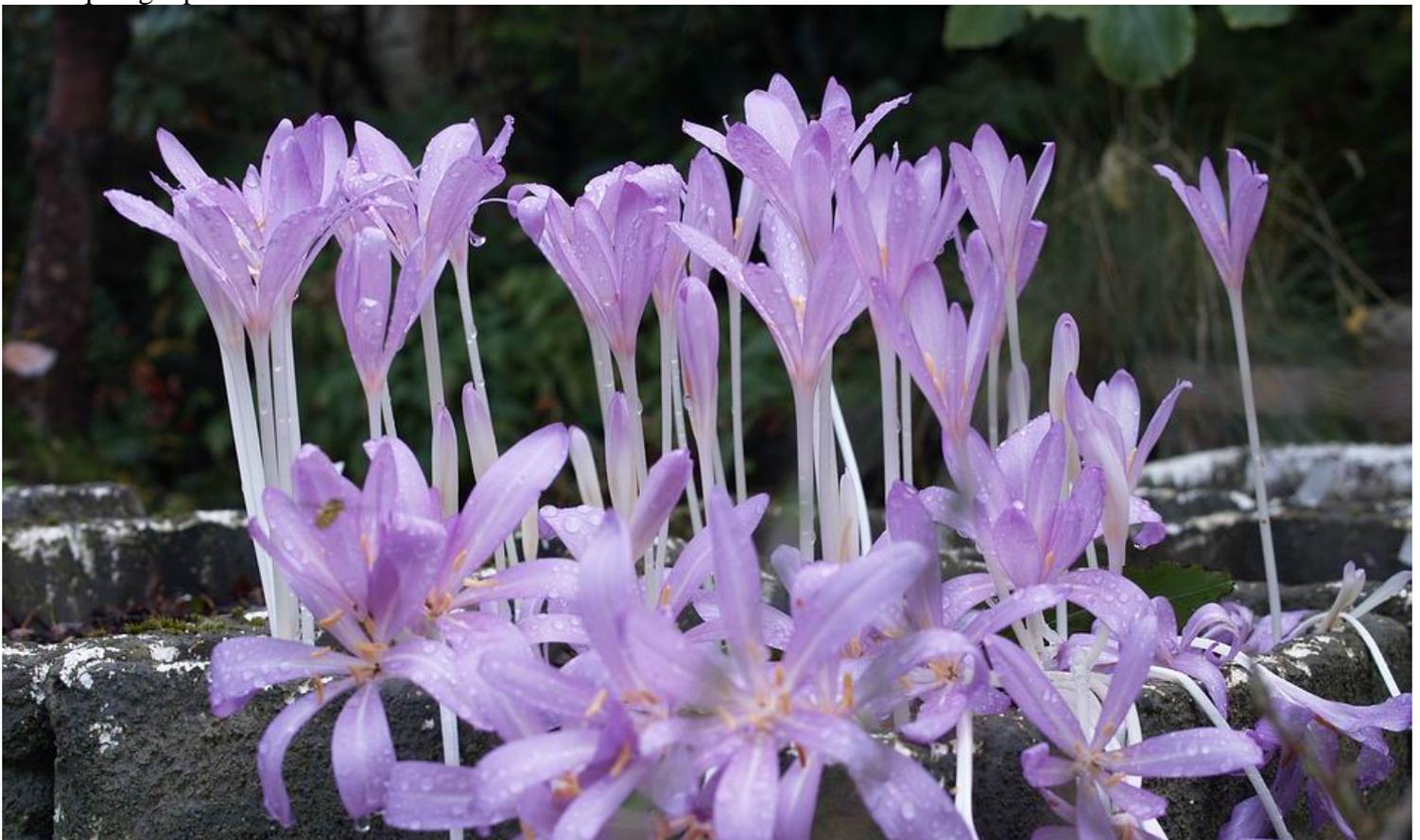
Colchicum speciosum album

The way I deal with the leaves that come in the spring is to plant the bulbs at the base of trees or grouped with other plants of a similar scale. Some of the larger Alliums are great companions for the Colchicums as they can flower through the colchicum leaves at a time when their own leaves can look somewhat tatty and that is just one successful combination.



Colchicum 'Water Lily'

Colchicum 'Water Lily' is not my favourite- in fact I am not sure if I like it or not- its one saving grace for me is that even when the flowers are toppled by the weather they still manages to hold themselves open. Above they are in a bed with spring bulbs that flower very early before the colchicum leaves get going, then various other plants like Aquilegia provide summer interest.



Colchicum laetum

I still grow a few Colchicums in the deep polystyrene boxes for propagation purposes and then there is no trouble with the leaves as the boxes can be moved to a prominent site when they are in flower and moved back to a nursery area later.



Autumn bed

The Arisaema, Dactylorhiza and Uvularia leaves are all taking on their autumn colours as they die back in this bed. As soon as they have gone completely I will tidy them away to the compost heap and mulch the bed over in readiness for the mass spring display from the smaller bulbs.



Cyclamen hederifolium

More Uvularia and Arisaema have dominated this area over the summer but now the Cyclamen hederifolium is taking its turn in the limelight. It looks particularly attractive when shafts of sunlight burst through the tree canopy highlighting some spots of colour.



Cyclamen hederifolium silver leaf

This is a group of *Cyclamen hederifolium* seedlings from the silver leaf group and they are especially useful to light up the more shaded areas. In a month's time most of the leaves will be off the trees and the cyclamen will then receive the full power of our subdued winter light.



Cyclamen hederifolium album

Here an attractive leaf form of *Cyclamen hederifolium* makes a focal point at the edge of one of the raised beds.



Cyclamen mirabile

In the bulb house I have to keep up with the good husbandry by removing all the spent flowers that have dropped from the Cyclamen mirabile. If I do not do this they will become infected by botrytis in the cold damp conditions and if they remain in contact with the leaves, stems or corm of the cyclamen they too will become infected to the detriment of the plant.



Fritillaria bulb



October storm

While cleaning up the last of the Fritillaria pots I noticed that despite having not been watered yet root growth is appearing in some. There are a number of interesting lessons that we can learn from the pot on the left which has not been fully repotted for two years now.

The first is that some the bulbs have moved themselves to the bottom of the pot - in fact it is half in the plunge and half in the pot. The other lesson is that the roots have initiated and been looking for water which they found in this area of the plunge below a drip from the roof and so they have entered the first phase of rapid root growth. It is vital that despite the fact that I will not see any signs of above ground growth for some months the plant is in growth and will need to be kept moist. Being October I have of course applied the second storm to the bulb house and now I have also started off the Fritillaria house with its first storm.



Galanthus nivalis reginae olgae

While not wanting to admit to having 'white fever' or indeed to be whipping it up I do have the first *Galanthus* in flower just now. I do not find *Galanthus reginae olgae* to be that hardy in our garden as most of the ones I have planted over the years quickly die out so I have taken to keeping a few in pots in the bulb house where we can enjoy their early beauty.



Colours of autumn

I will finish off with a selection of the colours of autumn.