



BULB LOG 11.....15<sup>th</sup> March 2011



**Corydalis solida**



### **Corydalis malkensis and solida**

The ten days of good sunny weather has stimulated many bulbs into rapid growth as you can see from the above pictures where the first of the Corydalis are coming into flower.

The earlier forms of Corydalis solida and Corydalis malkensis are both now showing colour but are not yet in full bloom.

The pictures above show my current trend for mixed plantings that I am establishing all around the garden. My aim is for a vibrant display of mixed plants and mixed colours all through the year and this is an early spring version with Galanthus and Corydalis.

The rush into growth came to a sudden end as a cold front came in bringing winter back with it.

Every year as the Rhododendron thomsonii (on the left) is coming into flower the wind arrives and this year was no exception. Last week gale force winds arrived which snapped the pedicels blasting most of the flowers that were only just opening off the bush.



### **Rhododendron thomsonii**



### **Rhododendron thomsonii**

For the moment the ground displays a red carpet of *Rhododendron thomsonii* flowers which will soon be replaced with a mass of bulbous species whose growths will push up from their winter layers to hopefully display their flowers giving a succession of changing colours.



### **Early bed**

None of the expanse of mulched ground seen in this bed will be visible in a few weeks time because the bed is crammed with plants whose growth will soon emerge.



**Hepatica, Galanthus and Corydalis**

Other mixed plantings offer great colour combinations such as this pink form of *Hepatica nobilis* in the foreground neutralized by the white *Galanthus* which leads the eye into a mass of mixed *Corydalis* colours beyond.



### **Crocus herbertii**

The wonderful egg yolk yellow flowers of *Crocus herbertii*, formerly known as *C. gargaricus* subsp. *Herbertii*, glow in the sunshine beside another pink *Hepatica*. This pink form of *hepatica* has always come true from seed and we have a number of them planted all around in various associations with the early emerging bulbs.

I know that some people will find some of these colour combinations too much but not me - I love mixing all the colours

that nature provides us with together and they never clash as long as you include some neutrality in the form of white. Colour coordinated plantings where gardeners plant blue beds, pink beds or white beds are not my style.



**Galanthus plicatus**



This is an interesting form of *Galanthus plicatus* where if you look very carefully you can see that all the mature bulbs in the clump have two flowers on a stem - the small picture shows this clearly. Offset bulbs which are also flowering have only the typical single flower per stem but I am certain that this twin flowered feature is genetic and all top sized bulbs will produce twin flowered scapes.



**Leucojum vernum**

As well as the snow drops we have plenty clumps of snow flakes, *Leucojum vernum*, which have done some self seeding around the garden showing a range of variation. This one is quite distinctive with its yellow ovaries it is also inclined to have yellowish tips to the petals. The variety *carpathicum* has typically yellow tips to the petals in stead of the normal green ones but I find the degree of yellow can vary from year to year and flower to flower. It is clearly a feature that is affected by growing conditions such as temperature and light levels.



### **Narcissus romieuxii**

Last autumn I raised the crown of two pine trees growing in the peat wall by removing the lower branches. This exposed a large area under the trees to light and provided me with a new, if challenging, planting opportunity. Among the plants I am trying there are the hoop petticoat daffodils such as *Narcissus romieuxii* which I have never succeeded in growing satisfactorily outside before. I am very encouraged to see this one flowering happily at the edge of this recovered planting zone below the tree and will definitely plant a lot more forms there next summer when we are doing the repotting.



### **Narcissus romieuxii**

In the bulb houses there are plenty fine forms of *Narcissus romieuxii* to choose from. While some of their flowers are now going over, some like this good yellow form, are just coming out.



**Narcissus seedling**

As I never get around to collecting all the seed before the capsules open it is inevitable that I get stray seedlings appearing all over. When I used clay pots these chance seedlings would mostly appear in the exposed areas of sand plunge between the round pots - now with square plastic pots sitting side by side any seeds drop into adjacent pots. This is not a big problem when the neighboring pots have Crocus or Fritillaria in them as the bulbs types are easily separated but when they appear in Narcissus pots there is a major risk of contamination of the forms as strays will appear. The easiest way to avoid this problem is by being vigilant and collecting all the seed before the capsules open. I have to admit that I do enjoy finding these strays which, like the one above, are very beautiful in their own right. I show another one below.



**Narcissus seedling**



**Narcissus bulbocodium, Morocco**

Here is a pot of seedlings raised from an original introduction from Morocco of *Narcissus bulbocodium* - the naming of these many variable hoop petticoats is very complex and confusing to say the least. They are so promiscuous in cultivation where there are so many of them growing together as I suspect they are in the wild if they get the opportunity.



**Narcissus bulbocodium, Portugal**

This pot of seedlings raised from a small flowered form of *Narcissus bulbocodium* originally collected in Portugal shows how much variation there can be within this species when you compare it to the large flaring flowers of the one from Morocco above.



**Crocus biflorus and Narcissus jeanmondii**

Even smaller is this tiny upward facing *Narcissus jeanmondii* also from Morocco and obviously very closely related to *N. bulbocodium*. I nearly lost this species a few years ago but have now managed to build back to two flowering plants which I have been careful to cross pollinate in the hope that I will get some true to type seedlings.



**Narcissus 'Don Stead'**

In the foreground is a pot *Narcissus 'Don Stead'* a hybrid between *Narcissus cantabricus* and *N. bulbocodium* behind it is *Narcissus albidus*.



***Narcissus cantabricus petunioides***

A lovely selection of petunioid forms of the crystalline white *Narcissus cantabricus*.



***Narcissus albidus occidentalis***

I am aware that many of the names that I use are being revised but until all the information is published and easily accessible, preferably in a fine new monograph, I am sticking with the names that I first acquired the plants as.



**Narcissus perez-chiscanoii**

This is a pot of seedlings of *Narcissus perez-chiscanoii* a species close to *N. hispanicus* but here showing that some hybridization with *Narcissus cyclamineus* has occurred in my frames. Notice the small *Narcissus* in the pot on the right this is *Narcissus* 'Mini-cycla'.



*Narcissus*  
'Minicycla':  
since 2003 it  
has been known  
as the  
"Minicycla  
Group"

*Narcissus* 'Minicycla' is a hybrid between *Narcissus asturiensis* and *N. cyclamineus* that has been around since at least 1912. It has never become common and if other growers experience is the same as mine I know why that would be. I find it is not that easy a bulb to please I do well for a few years build up a reasonable pot full only to then suffer a major setback. On a number of occasions I have only just managed to rescue a few bulbs.



### ***Narcissus cyclamineus* x N 'Minicycla'**

Like many *Narcissus* hybrids *Narcissus* 'Minicycla' does not set seeds but you can use its pollen to fertilise another species or fertile hybrid. In an effort to get a stronger plant with similar qualities to 'Minicycla' I placed its pollen back onto one of its parents *Narcissus cyclamineus* and these are the resulting seedlings.

These plants are now 2/3 *Narcissus cyclamineus* and 1/3 *N. asturiensis* and you can see this clearly by the fact that the petals are swept further back than they are in 'Minicycla'

I will leave you this week with a side view of *Narcissus albidus occidentalis*. In such a diverse and attractive genus it is difficult to have favourites but I do like this elegant form in pure crystalline white and it has a delightful scent to further enhance its delights.



***Narcissus albidus occidentalis***