



BULB LOG 31.....31st July 2013



Bulb house

Working on replacing the bulb house staging has taken up much of my time this week. Following on from last week I cut away all the old staging, renovated the electrics and made level bases for the legs of the new staging to sit on.



Staging

I ordered the staging from a company called Two Wests who customised the units to fit my requirements. The three packages arrived very quickly, within days of my order being placed, well before I had completed the ground works. The staging is made up of individual sections based around aluminium trays one above the other to form two levels - in my case these are 23 inches square. The lower tray can be fitted either way up so it can form a tray or a flat shelf, whichever you prefer. Side units make up the depth of the upper plunger to six inches. The bolts are left finger tight until the whole unit is assembled in place and levelled then I tightened all the bolts.



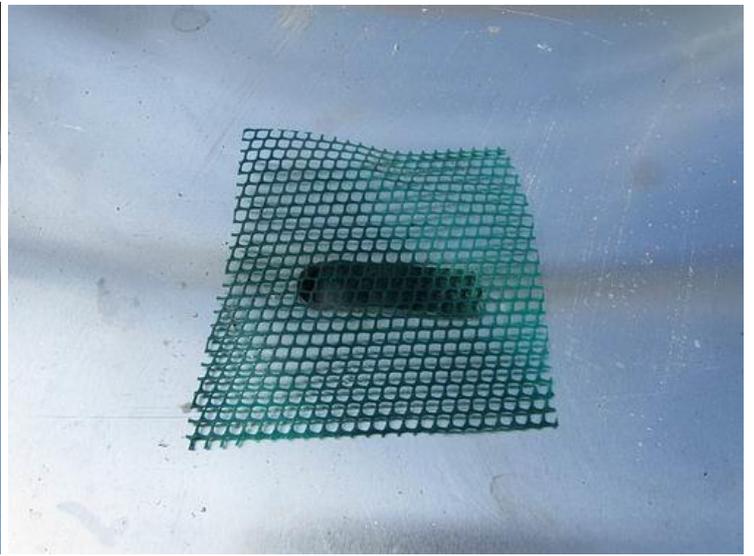
Staging units

I ordered three units each 6 x 2 feet which fit perfectly into my 6 x 8 feet glasshouse forming a 'U' shaped plunge which maximises the planting space while leaving sufficient room for access. The height of the plunges is 30 inches which is lower than my old homemade versions but makes it very easy for me to reach the far side of the plunges.



If you are taller than me and would prefer a higher level then you could request the legs being cut to a longer length or you could simply build up a brick platform for the legs to sit on.

Having all the staging in place I now turn to drainage. When the weight of the sand and pots is added the lowest part of the tray is going to be at the centre so I drilled a 2cm hole in the centre of each of the top plunge trays



Drainage holes

I cut a strip of capillary matting and pushed it through the hole and covered that with a square of plastic mesh that will allow free flow of the water but prevent the sand from washing out through the hole.



Guttering for drainage.

The strip of capillary matting will guide the water down through the hole into a plastic gutter that I have suspended underneath the trays. Without the capillary matting there is a risk that the water would flow out across the underneath surface of the tray, held there by surface tension before gravity wins out.



Guttering for drainage

The guttering follows the U-shaped plunge blanked off at one end with two corner bends then a down pipe at the other end.



A bucket or watering can will be placed there to catch and recycle the water that drains away.

This system will also allow me to recycle the nutrients that wash from the potting mix especially when I add the potassium supplement to the bulbs in the spring. The plastic guttering is suspended to ensure a slow fall in level so

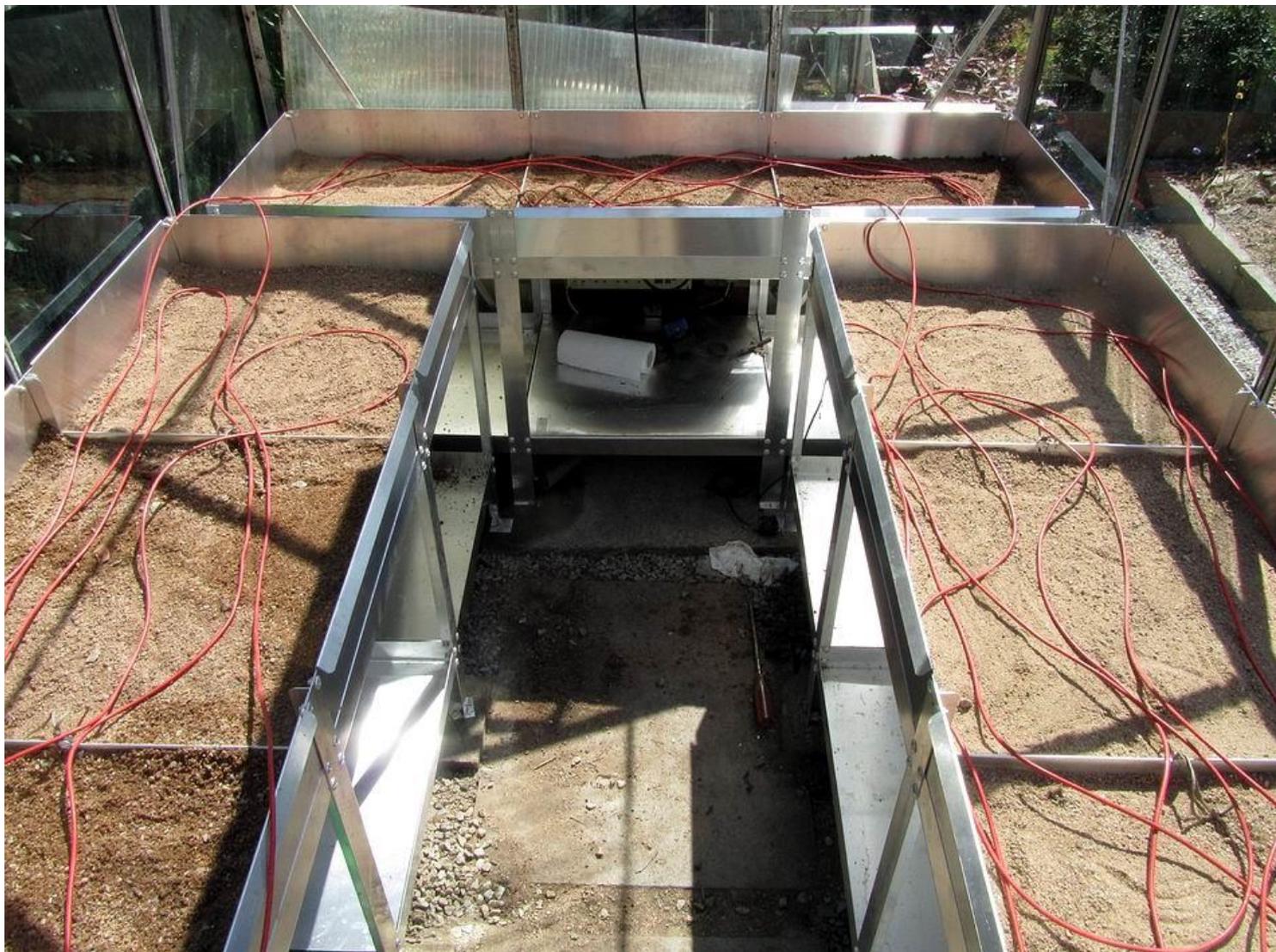
the water would flow towards the outlet side by non-perishable nylon sting located between the joins of each tray. I tested my drainage prior to adding the sand by flooding each tray and it worked exactly as I planned.



Adding the sand



I placed about 5cms of sand in the bottom of each tray making it nice and level.



Soil warming cable

Next I laid out a soil warming cable - not to heat the bulbs but to help protect them from freezing in prolonged periods of frost. It is important that these cables are warm when you manipulate them to prevent damage and with



the heat wave we are having that was not a problem – on previous occasions I have to plug the cable in to warm it up and make it flexible. I roughly lay the cable so that each tray has an even distribution as shown above then I carefully space the cables in each section holding it in place by adding sand. I add a final layer of sand and level it off ready to receive the plastic pots.

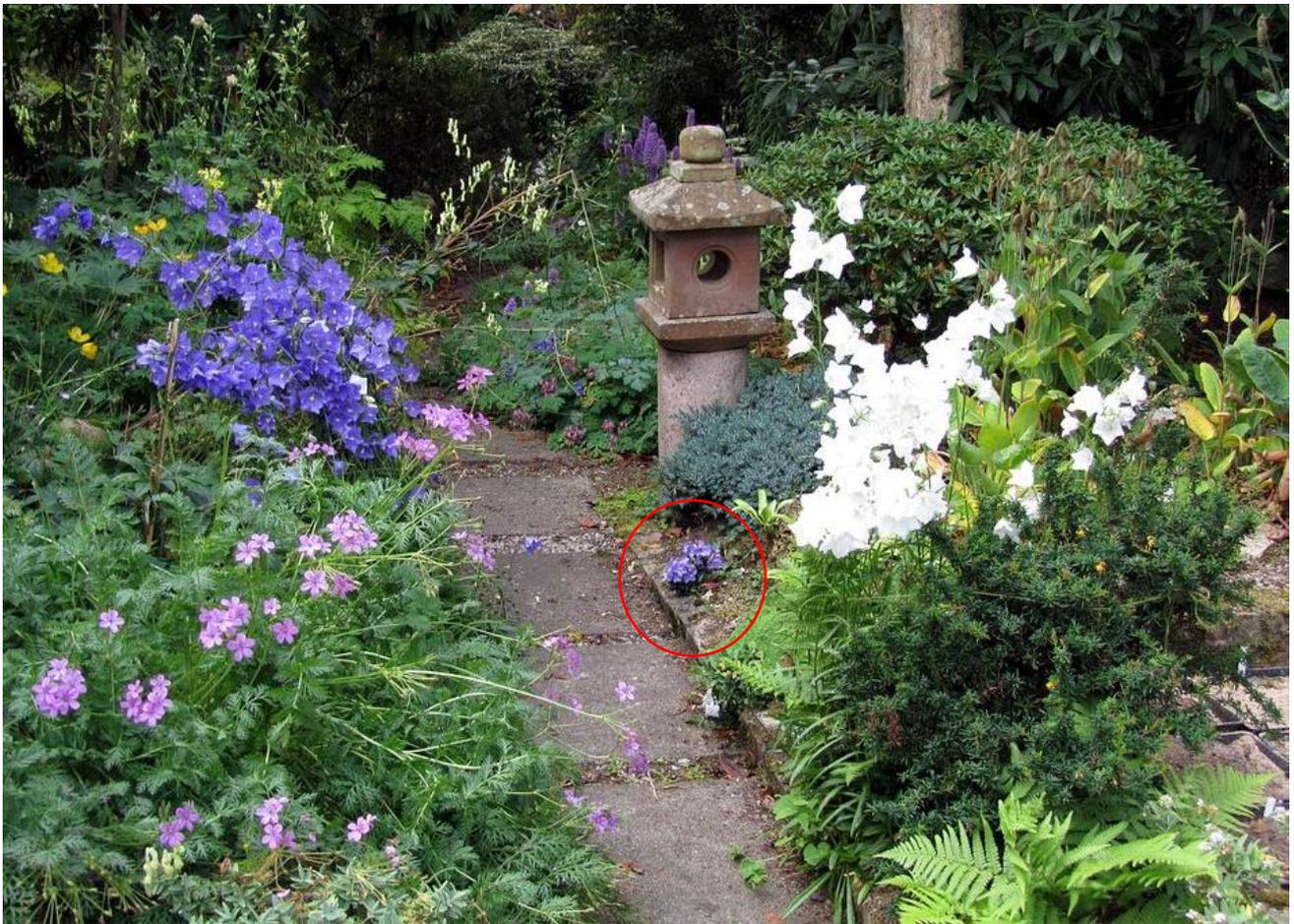


All the pots are now back in place in their new staging. I have set all but one of the lower sections as trays and I have not yet decided how exactly I will utilise them. The one facing you is orientated as a shelf because of the electrics behind the others may get sand or capillary matting added to take more pots as I need.



Campanula nitida alba

We got this plant as *Campanula nitida alba* about 40 years ago from Jack Drakes nursery attracted by its compact habit and the pure white wax like flowers.



Campanula persicifolia

When we first raised seedlings from it we were surprised by the size of the offspring which grew up to be metre tall plants in both white and blue. It would seem that the original plant has a recessive gene that causes it to remain dwarf and that gene is only passed on to a very small number of the seedlings. It does not seem to matter whether the seed comes from the compact form or the true type you still get the same chance of getting the compact form.



I have circled this plant in the previous picture to show the scale – it self-seeded from its larger relatives. When you have experience of this plant you can identify the dwarf seedlings at an early stage by the foliage.



Mutisia oligidon hybrid

The hot spell we have been enjoying is very unusual in our part of the country and many of us are simply not acclimatised to cope with the heat – I am sure if we got enough of it we could adapt. The same is true of the plants we grow. The majority of our plants, Primula, Meconopsis, Rhododendrons thrive in our cool moist summer and have been suffering with both the heat and lack of water.

However some plants, like this Mutisia oligidon hybrid, are enjoying the extra warmth and sunshine.

It grows well most years but is flowering much more freely this year as the sunshine encourages the flower buds to develop and open their daisy flowers





Roscoea alpina

The Roscoea were even later by about two weeks to appear this year - we would normally expect them at the beginning of July.



Roscoea humeana alba



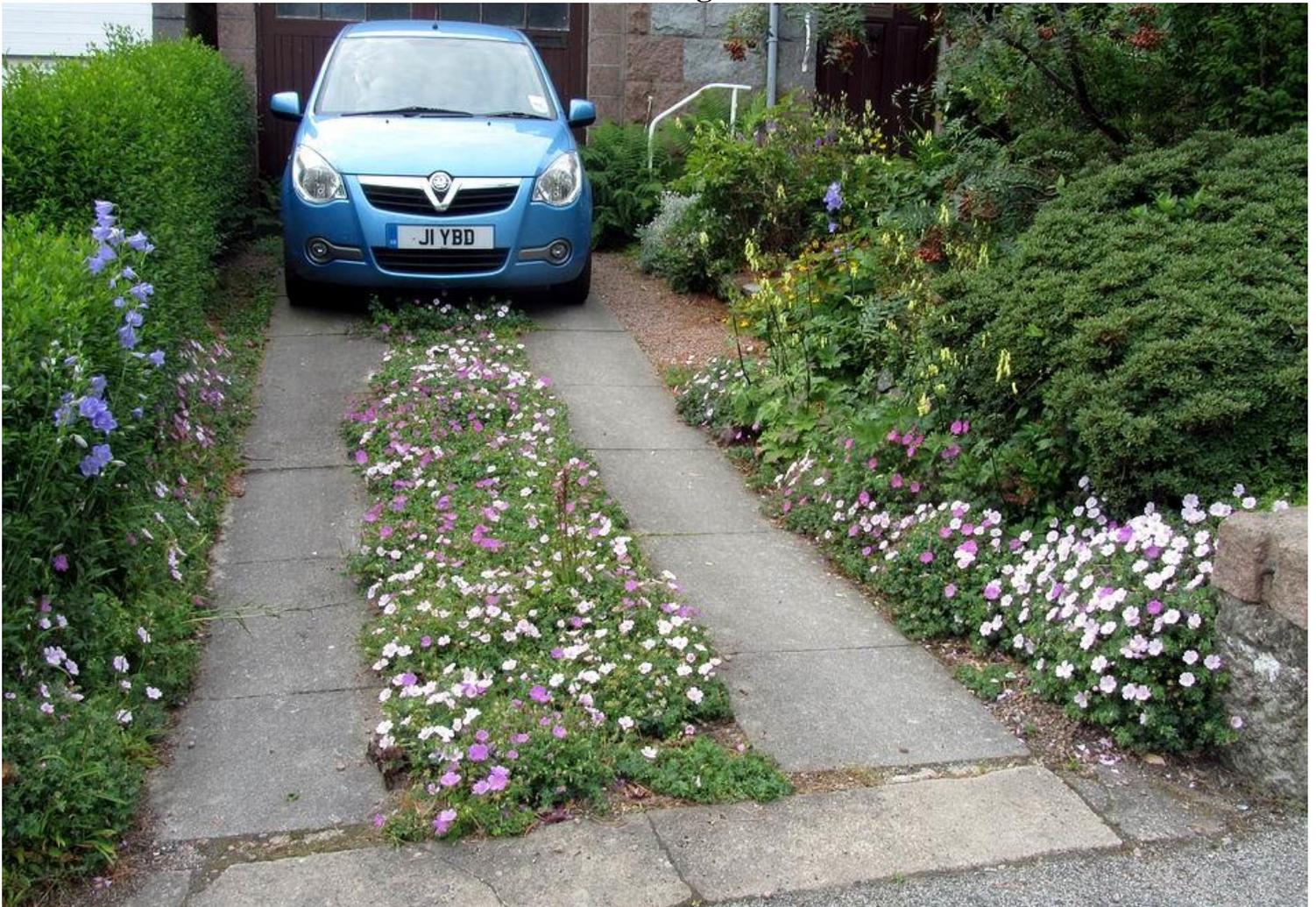
The *Geranium sanguineum* in the front drives are enjoying the sunshine and flowering profusely.



West Drive



Geranium sanguineum



The other drive concludes this week's bulb log.....