



SRGC

----- Bulb Log Diary -----

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Growing so many early flowering plants mean our garden bursts into flower many months before others in our neighbourhood. Beautiful combinations arise such as that shown above where the new leaves and flowers of an Epimedium come through the black leaves of *Ophiopogon planiscapus nigrescens* with *Corydalis malkensis* flowers and foliage providing a back drop.



*Corydalis malkensis* is among the first of the genus to flower in our garden and it is one of those plants that gently seeds itself around - a characteristic that I like. With a bit of help distributing the seed around other beds it forms a nice link all around the garden and by mid-May it has gone back underground until next year. The weather conditions of each year govern which plants will flower simultaneously and it is fascinating how the display from the same plants in the same beds varies each year. This year *Corydalis malkensis* is flowering ahead of *Corydalis solida* which is just starting come into flower now.

## Bulb Bed

Checking back the bulb bed is ahead with much more leafy growth than it had on the same date last year.

This is one of the factors that retain my interest - year after year the same beds with the same plants respond to the weather conditions providing almost infinite variations on a theme. Add into the equation the plants' increase and I will never lose my interest.





I reworked this narrow strip between the path, the raised beds and sand plunge last year, see [Bulb log 3713](#), using broken concrete blocks and decided to plant it up with Hepatica and Corydalis to provide a colourful mix early in the year.



I am now seeing the first flowering and the effect is exactly what I wanted to create - mixed colours of Hepatica flowers coming through the ferny foliage of the Corydalis whose flowers also add to the colourful effect. As the season progresses the Corydalis will go underground and the Hepatica leaves will provide interest for the rest of the year until I cut them back in the winter. I have also been considering adding some Cyclamen coum and trying *C. mirabile* perhaps, to give autumn and winter flowers.



Also growing happily in broken concrete in one end of a raised slab bed are these saxifrages – the first of the alpinas to flower. I also like to grow these in mixed colonies where I can enjoy all the colours together – single colour themed beds do nothing for me.



I reworked this slab bed a few years ago keeping the original pink granite rock but raising up one end into a mound of broken concrete – this was planted up with cuttings and by scattering seeds and now we are starting to see the flowers.



The same effect can be seen on a smaller scale in one of my cement-coated fish-box troughs where a bunch of Czech grown cultivars of *Saxifraga* now reside.



One of our oldest *Saxifraga*s, a yellow cultivar, is flowering better than I ever remember – it is one of the many plants that seem to have enjoyed that we actually had a summer with warm sunny weather last year.



### ***Primula marginata* 'Napoleon' trough**

This is a shallow rimmed trough that I built up with white quartzite rock that was in our garden when we arrived all those years ago and planted it with a single compact cultivar of *Primula marginata*. This primula tends to form branches with all the growth at the tips and after a number of years the growth become too long – that situation has now been reached and this year as soon as the flowers start fading I will clip it right back almost to the ground. I have done this before and know I will get new buds forming on the cut stems plus I will root the cuttings from the top growth I trimmed off.



### ***Narcissus cyclamineus***

I have been carefully pollinating the flowers on this group of *Narcissus cyclamineus* in the hope of getting seed.



**Narcissus bulbocodium**

A nice colony of *Narcissus bulbocodium* is established in a gravel area. I originally scattered some seeds and since then have allowed them to naturalise – that is, I do not collect the seeds but let them disperse in their own way.



**A group of *Narcissus minor* in a sand bed**



### **Erythronium dens-canis**

A white form of *Erythronium dens-canis* growing under a *Rhododendron* opens its flowers in the warmth.



### **Scoliopus bigelovii**

We have a number of groups of *Scoliopus bigelovii* growing around the garden – while odd ones started to flower as early as December we are now in the main flowering period - these also self-seed around the garden. The attractive striped parts of the flower are bracts the true petals are the three thin upward pointing parts around the style.



**Scoliopus hallii**

Even smaller and easily overlooked is *Scoliopus hallii* – it has smaller less showy flowers and plain green leaves.



**Fritillaria house**

Many frits are now in flower as they respond to the bright sunny days under glass.

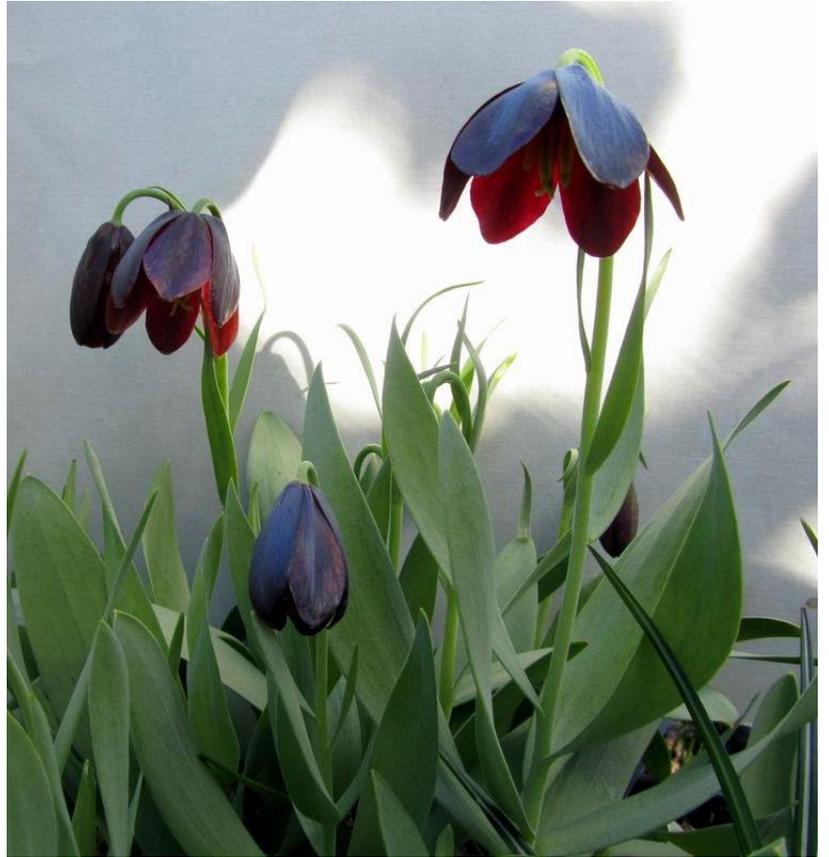


***Fritillaria pinardii***

*Fritillaria pinardii* seems very variable with many colour forms as the plants above and below show – I am sure somewhere down the road someone will split them up!



***Fritillaria pinardii***



**Fritillaria obliqua**

I raised this pot of *Fritillaria obliqua* from my own seed and now they are starting to flower for the first time. On looking at them I noticed that the one on the left had a different shape to the flower and on looking more carefully I saw that it also had tessellations – something that I do not associate with *Fritillaria obliqua*.



**Fritillaria obliqua hybrid**



**Fritillaria obliqua**

Looking into the flower you can see the tessellation on the flower I am presuming is a hybrid - also the style is much more divided than the species on the right. Another difference that I can only tell you about is unusually for this genus *Fritillaria obliqua* has a pleasant scent - the hybrid has none. Looking around our other plants I can speculate that with some help from bees, wasps, or flies, *Fritillaria argolica* could be the pollen parent.



**Fritillaria caucasica**

Other similar looking fritillaries with dark flowers are Fritillaria caucasica above and the smaller Fritillaria armena below – which increases well from rice grains.



**Fritillaria armena**



***Fritillaria straussii***



Another first for me is this *Fritillaria straussii*, raised from seed flowering for the first time. The first year of flowering is not always typical of the actual size of the plant so I look forward to seeing how it develops as the bulb matures.





**Fritillaria bucharica**



Early spring has certainly arrived in the garden although frosts are forecast for the coming week.....