



BULB LOG 20.....14th May 2014



Anemone flowers



Anemone nemerosa, ranunculoides and their hybrids grow from short underground stems; rhizomes, that form tangled mats in our humus rich top layer of soil. If they spread too far it is easy to lift them as the leaves die back and split out the roots. You will be amazed just how many roots there might be and even the broken bits can form a new plant.

Unlike the Anemone the Tulips do not like the cool damp weather.



I do like tulips and have been trying to grow them for many years - they are after all one of the closest relatives to Erythronium. The main difference being that Tulips have evolved in generally hotter drier climatic regions so their flowers can look upwards while Erythronium colonised wetter climatic regions bowing their heads to protect the reproductive floral parts. The narrow south facing bed at the base of our kitchen wall is where we try many of Tulips and some do manage to cope with our weather. The majority of the flowers above are *Tulipa batalini* which even manages to increase each year.



Tulipa humilis is another one that increases year on year growing here in our rock garden bed. I am always hoping that I will get some seed to set in the garden so that I can start to shift their tolerance towards our garden conditions unfortunately again we have had a cold wet period while they are in flower and that is not conducive to seed set.



Fritillaria flowering in the sand beds include *Fritillaria affinis tristulis* and *Fritillaria purdyii*.



Fritillaria purdyii

I am gradually, as I get spares from the Frit-house, planting Fritillaries directly into the garden – most are growing and in many cases they are even better than the ones I grow in pots. It used to be that I would keep some growing in pots as insurance in case I lost the garden ones but more often I am finding it to be the reverse with the ones in pots more likely to succumb.



***Fritillaria affinis* and its yellow form along with *Trillium grandiflorum*.**



Fritillaria pontica



Trillium decumbens

After a long time trying to get this beautiful trillium, thanks to a kind friend, we finally have one in flower.



Erythronium albidum

Another generous gift was this clump forming form of Erythronium albidum, unfortunately our weather was never dry or warm enough this year to allow the flowers to open. I will have to wait till next year and hope to see them open then but that is the nature of gardening - a game of patience and planning ahead, a journey not a destination.



Erythronium leaves

The cold wet weather does bring problems especially where the Erythroniums are so densely planted as they are in our plunge beds. As the petals fall they attract grey moulds which, if in contact with the leaves, will pass on the infection.



With the prolonged wet conditions these moulds grow and can kill off the leaves. While this is highly undesirable, provided you remove the dead leaves to help prevent the moulds going down to the bulb, these plants will only suffer a slight shortening of the growing period and I would still expect them to flower again next year.



Other plants affected by the cold wet conditions are these third year *Fritillaria* seedling leaves – their young cells had not hardened up sufficiently to allow them to survive such conditions and they too have been killed off prematurely. This has severely cut back the growing season I would have wished for these young bulbs and will result in slightly smaller bulbs and may mean I have to wait another year before they reach flowering size. As they in their third year of growth these pots are due to be tipped out in the summer months with the bulbs being moved on or planted into the garden so I will get to see bulbs.



Crocus seed pods

Gardening is all about success and failure resulting in excitement or disappointment but always we must learn lessons. The one I have learned is that growing from seed gives the best chances of long term success with plants in your garden.

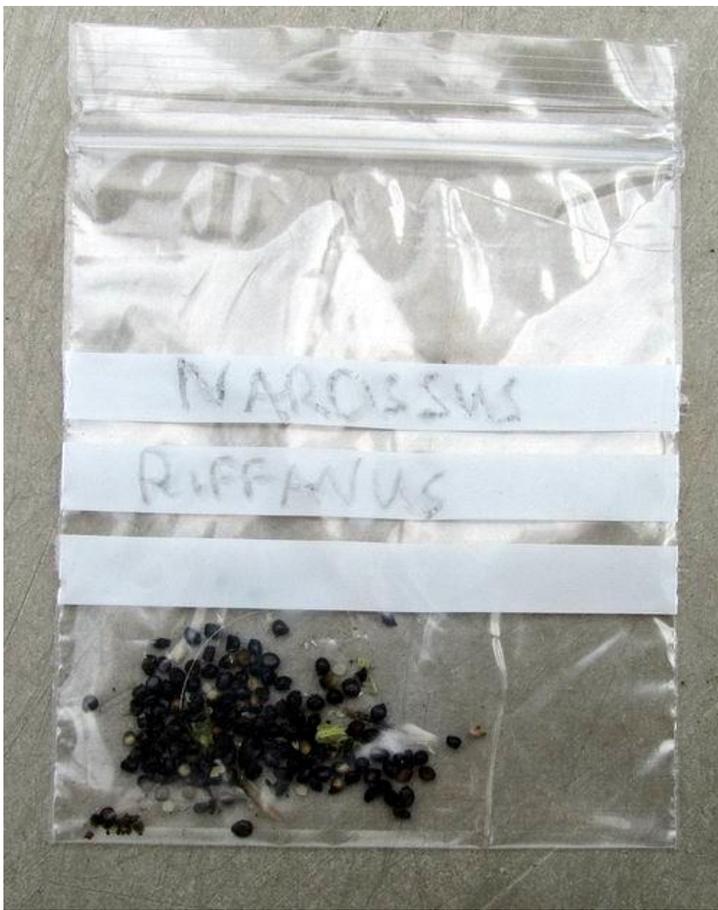


Fully ripe *Sternbergia sicula* seeds bursting out of their capsule.



Narcissus seed pods ready to be harvested

It is at this stage that I like to collect the seeds and then I store them until late August when I will sow them. I have been asked why I do not follow nature and sow them immediately to which I answer I am following nature. In their habitat the seeds are sown as they are dispersed into ground that will be warm and dry throughout the summer until the autumn rains both moisten and cool the ground, initiating germination.



The best way I can mimic these conditions in our northern garden is to store the seeds in small plastic packets mixed in with dry sand. Note - fresh seed should not be stored in plastic packets without adding dry sand to absorb any surplus moisture. The packets are placed in the potting shed or a shaded part of the bulb house where they will continue to ripen - do not put them in a fridge as this will be harmful to the viability of the seed. If I had enough room I could sow them into dry compost and keep the pots dry in the bulb house until the autumn but our limited space does not always allow this.



Due to our weather we struggle with *Paeonia cambessedesii* but we keep raising it from seed and trying to find a spot where we can keep it going— this one is in the same 'hot' bed as the tulips.



Paeonia mlokosewitschii

We find it much easier to accommodate the next two species which come from cooler moister growing regions.



Paeonia emodii



Glaucidium palmatum

Glaucidium palmatum thrives in our cool moist soils but this does not stop the flowers being damaged by the prolonged cold wet conditions we have just experienced – as well as by chewing fauna.

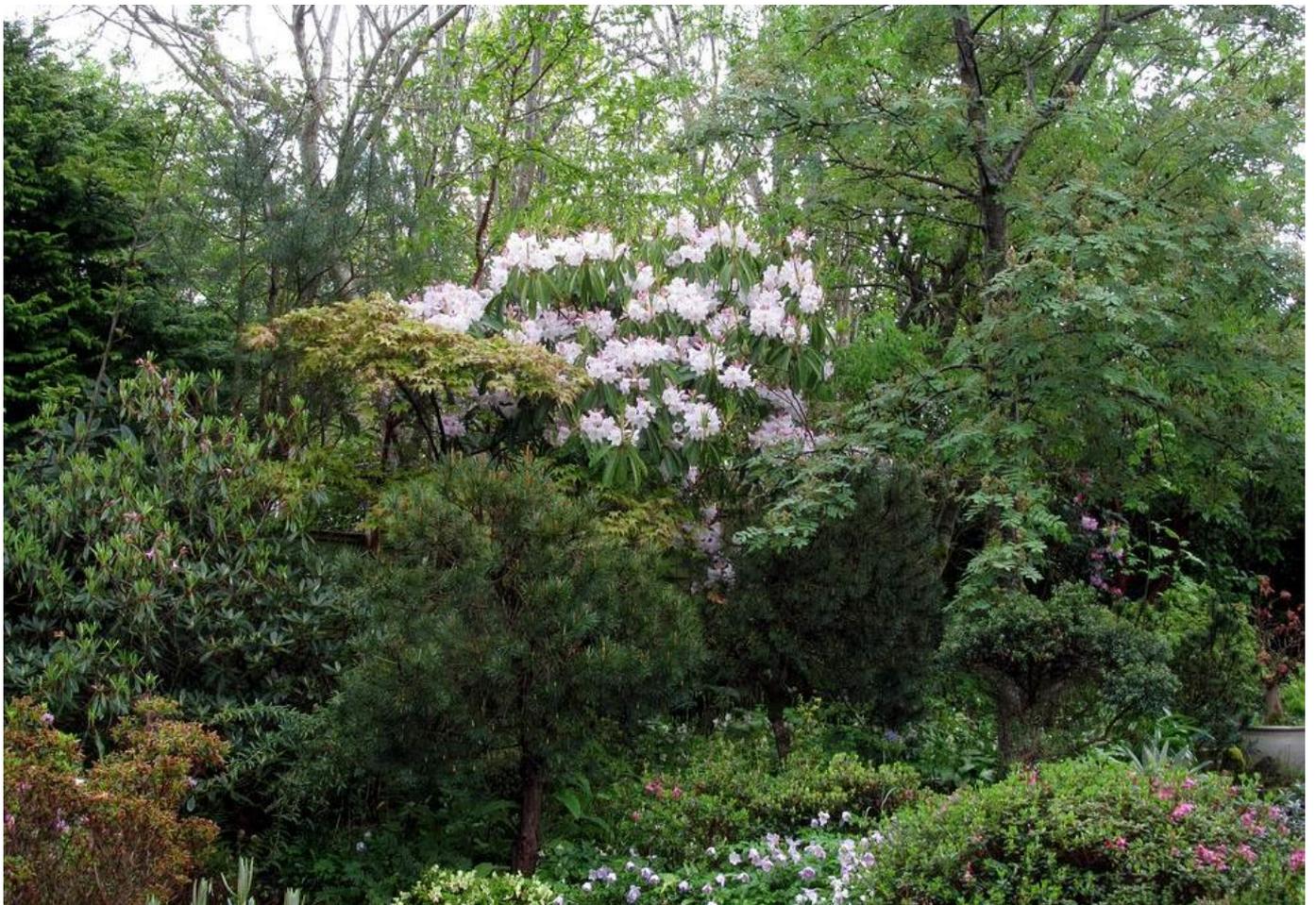


Rhododendron rex fictolacteum

One of the most stunning Rhodos we grow with flower trusses the size of your head! Its leaves however are only 1/3 of the size that they achieve in the wild or in the much wetter west coast gardens of Scotland.



Here is a view showing the scale – at 3-4 meters tall it is more of a small tree than a bush.



Rhododendron fortunei

This view shows an equally stunning plant, *Rhododendron fortunei*, which also has the most beautiful scent.



Rhododendron fortunei



Standing underneath looking upwards I am bathed in its beautiful scent.....