



BULB LOG 52.....30th December 2015





The cover picture is of **Narcissus 'Cedric Morris'** flowering unprotected in the garden – hence its slightly chewed and mud spattered condition – in contrast the **Narcissus romieuxii seedling** above is growing under the protection of the bulb house, note the rolled back corona.

Fritillaria caucasica is the only evidence above ground in the Frit-house – this is one of the earlier flowering species but this is way before it should bloom.

Below you will find three more chapters on species from 'Erythroniums in Cultivation' a fully illustrated e-book that I announced at the start of this year. I had hoped it would be finished by the end of this year however I have failed to meet that deadline. I will work my way through posting the remaining chapters and hope to upload the full combined work around the end of January.

Thank you, everyone, for your support and encouragement through another year of Bulb Logs and I wish all of you a very healthy, happy and good gardening year in 2016.....

Erythronium montanum





Erythronium montanum



Erythronium montanum is the last of all the *Erythroniums* to break through the ground in the garden - it is also the first to ripen seed and go dormant. This gives it the shortest growing season of all the species we grow. As the name suggests it is a mountain species coming into growth as the snow banks melt.

It has a white flower with a central yellow zone which, when viewed closely, reveals a zig-zag pattern in a deeper shade of yellow. The yellow pollen is held on long slender filaments and the white style is deeply divided into three recurving lobes.



The beauty of this species starts to reveal itself from the moment the crystalline white flowers start to unfurl – they emerge folded and creased like silk before expanding to their full glory.



The flowers can be quite large, the width of my palm, 10cms, across. The width of the petals can vary so some, with separation between, are starry in appearance while others have broad and overlapping petals from about half way down. Even when fully expanded the petals retain a characteristic twist as they taper down to the narrowest of tips.

Seed

Provided our weather is reasonably mild and dry during the short flowering season we will get seeds from this species most years.



Erythronium montanum seed



Erythronium montanum seed

When I first read about this species, many years ago, I took the words 'it could not be flowered in cultivation' as a challenge, making me determined to try and prove otherwise. I acquired seed from a few sources that supplied collected North American seed and after around five years I had not only managed to get *Erythronium montanum* to flower but also got some viable seed. Since then I have always sown our own garden produced seed in every year it has been set.

Each subsequent generation of garden seedlings became more acclimatised and adapted to grow in our garden conditions.

Leaves



Erythronium montanum leaves

Erythronium montanum has plain green leaves with no markings. The petiole is more noticeable than in some other species.



Sometimes I find the leaves can be rather yellowish in colour with the dark green veins standing out –this is typical of a plant suffering a nutrient deficiency. To combat this I will water a few times during the growth period with a balanced liquid fertiliser with also contains trace elements. Understanding that the plant grows as the snow retreats leads me to conclude that it has evolved with no shortage of water during growth - in addition all that snow melt water will contain many nutrients, built up and stored over the winter, so it has a constant supply of moisture and nutrients during the growth - I mimic that by watering with the liquid feed.

Bulbs



Erythronium montanum bulbs

Erythronium montanum bulbs are that bit different from most species with the exception of the closely related Erythronium elegans.



Their bulbs have a long slightly curved tapering shape. The very thin tunic covering the bulb tends to wear away more than in many other species so the bulbs look whiter.

The vestiges of the previous year's bulb remains attached, like links in a chain, to the base and occasionally a secondary growth will form.





Erythronium montanum chains

These chains, consisting of the compressed stem part of previous year's bulbs, will remain dormant for many years before eventually drying out but if the dominant growth of the main bulb is removed or damaged, new buds will form on these chains.

Removing these chains does not harm the main bulb in any way so when I replot I will remove the chains, splitting them into individual links, and then growing them in the same conditions as the bulbs. Each link will form at least one new bulb.



Erythronium montanum

I only grew this precious plant in pots or mesh plunge baskets for many years until I had built up sufficient quantities to try some planted out into the open garden.



Erythronium montanum flowering in a mesh plunge basket.

Erythronium montanum is likely to remain one of the more challenging species to grow in the garden - you are more likely to succeed with it in cooler gardens like ours than you are in warmer areas.

The remaining images show *Erythronium montanum* growing and flowering in our rock garden bed.

Erythronium montanum



Erythronium montanum



Erythronium montanum

Erythronium elegans



Flower**Erythronium elegans**

Erythronium elegans hails from Oregon and looks very similar to *Erythronium montanum*: it has white flowers which turn shades of pink as they age. It is thought that this species may have evolved from an ancient cross between *Erythronium montanum* and *Erythronium revolutum*. I can see traces of both these species in the plants we grow - such as in the shape of the filaments which are intermediate not as slender as those of *E. montanum* - also the pink colour that develops in the flowers could possibly come from *E. revolutum*.

**Erythronium elegans**

Erythronium elegans



The pollen is golden yellow when ripe and the style is divided into three lobes but not so deeply as in *Erythronium montanum*.

Erythronium elegans

Seed

We get seed from *Erythronium elegans* most years which has resulted in sufficient plants for us to try planting them out in various situations in the garden. It does best in the more open areas towards the edges of the beds where it gets more light and sunshine. Where I do not collect the seeds this species has self-sown forming nice groups growing in the gravel path.

***Erythronium elegans* seed capsule**



Erythronium elegans



Pictured above are the freshly collected seeds of *Erythronium elegans*. On the left are the stored seeds that have been soaked overnight ready for sowing, below.



Bulb**Erythronium elegans bulbs**

The bulbs of *Erythronium elegans* are similar in shape to those of the closely related *Erythronium montanum* but they tend to retain a bit more of the thin tunic. The bulbs also have the distinct chains of previous year's growth attached to the base. Some clones will slowly forms clumps by offsets.



Leaf

Erythronium elegans leaves are plain green.

I have read that Erythronium elegans can have patterned leaves but all the plants we have raised from both introduced and home produced seed have been plain - a few have the slightest hint of a silver pattern when they first emerge but this soon fades.



Erythronium elegans



Erythronium elegans is relatively amenable to general cultivation - it is certainly an easy plant to grow in our garden where it lives up to its specific name bringing elegance with its beautiful white flowers which age to shades of pink.



Erythronium elegans





Erythronium elegans

Erythronium klamathense





Erythronium klamathense

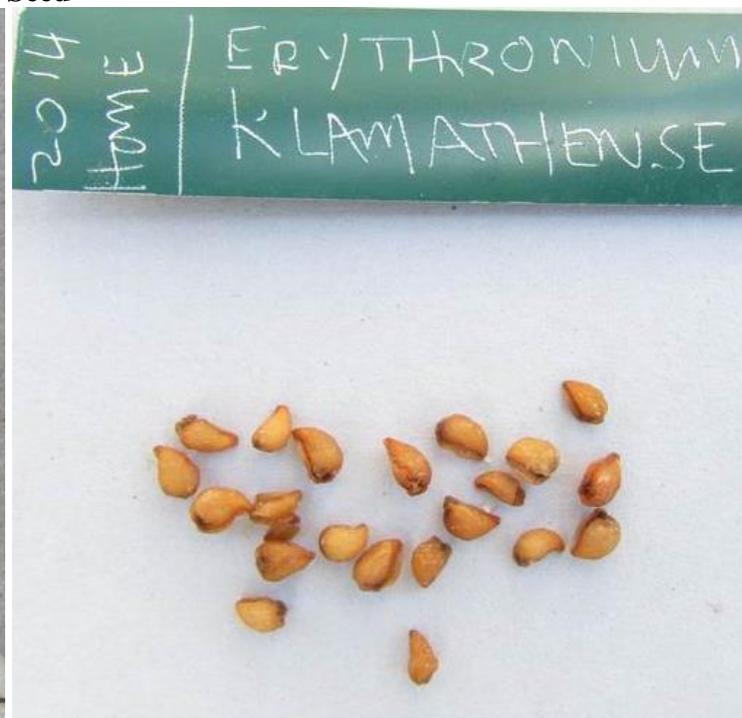


Erythronium klamathense is another species with white flowers which have a yellow centre. The filaments are slender, the pollen can be pale or golden yellow and the style is club shaped or slightly divided in to three at the tip.

Erythronium klamathense

Because of its diminutive size, 10 to 15 cms at flowering, you are unlikely to confuse this species with any other sharing similar colouring.

Up to three flowers per stem can be produced on a mature bulb.

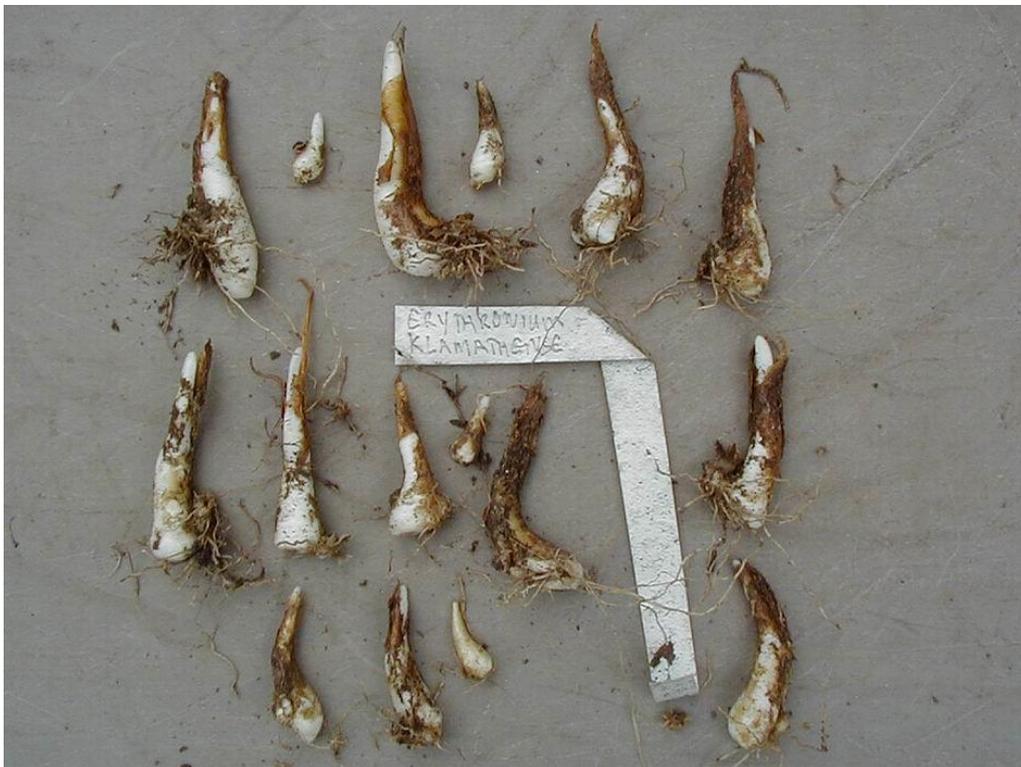
**Seed**

Seed is set in the garden most years.

Bulb



Erythronium klamathense bulbs



Being one of the smaller species the bulbs are similarly smaller than most others but have the familiar shape.



Erythronium klamathense leaves

The leaves of this species are plain green.

Due to its small stature you have to choose carefully where you plant this species – it is ideally suited to a trough or raised bed where you can fully appreciate its simple beauty.

As I do with all species, I grow the original bulbs, raised from wild collected seed, in mesh plunge baskets as a reference stock.



Erythronium klamathense