



BULB LOG 31.....3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016





This week I have been busy working through the seasonal task of hedge cutting, with tree pruning and general cutting back also waiting our attention but that does not stop me from looking and enjoying the subtle side of the garden. Our garden is at its most floriferous in the early part of the year, I say floriferous and not colourful because if you look there are still plenty shades, colours and textures in the leaves plus we still have some flowers. Hedge cutting gives me time

to think about what we are trying to achieve in our garden, I have always stated that our garden is my encyclopaedia, my library, my museum, my school room, my studio and my playground all rolled into one – a place where I can never get bored. To me gardening is about being a habitat observer and manipulator – I am trying to adjust our garden conditions to allow as wide a range of plants to grow as possible. While I can admire the work involved in a very formal style of garden, where everything is laid out very geometrically and kept very neat and tidy, I quickly get bored in that type of garden – there are few surprises or discoveries to be made.

I started out being interested in the wild plants in Scotland before I came to gardening and it is my aim to try and mimic those very things I found fascinating as an eleven year old when I walked the mountains and wild areas. Our pond may be formal in that it is a rectangle but it is very wild, and getting wilder, in appearance –



some may say unkempt! The moss-covered rock is one of my great delights, it is like the negative image of a trough, imagine the rock you carve out of a stone to make the planting area of a trough – then this is like that bit we normally discard. Artists are very familiar with positive and negative shapes.

The colony of *Pinguicula* that I established on the rock is growing well enough to be setting seed which I am now scattering around; some onto the moss covered slabs that form the sides of the pond. It used to be that we tried to prevent the moss and nature hiding the slabs surrounding the pond now my main aim is to see how many habitats I can create in this area.



The pond is a up to a metre deep in places and the rock and the pot containing this **Salix lanata** are placed on piles of bricks so that their tops are above the water level. I love *Salix lanata*, it was of the of the plants that first fascinated me in the wild, but it can get very big and sprawling; we had one that took over a large area of our front garden, however this one has been confined to a pot in the pond since 1985 where, like many I have seen in the

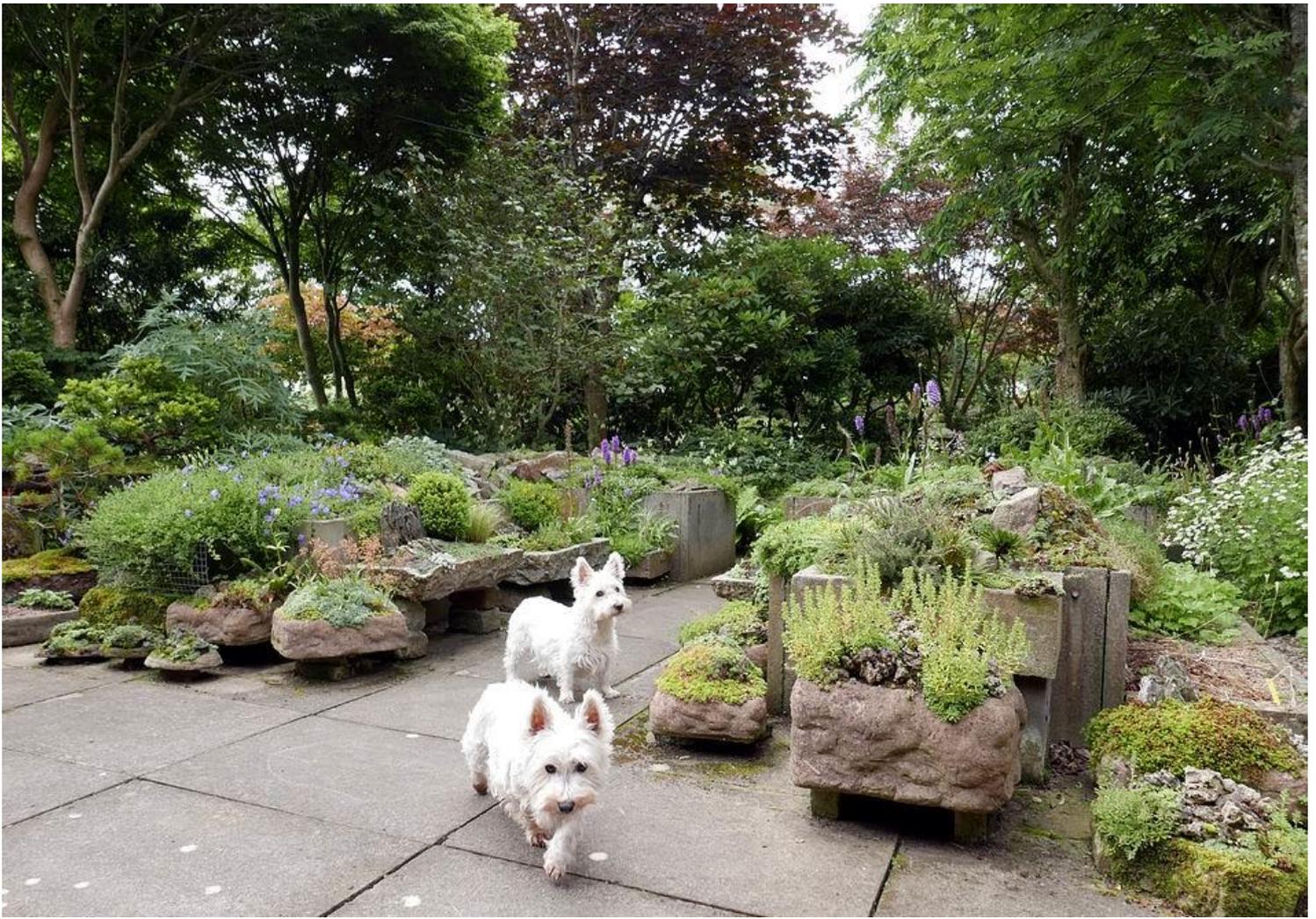


wilds of Scotland, the growth is kept in check by the wet habitat.

I planted this trough with *Salix* cuttings just over a year ago and just look how well they are growing. I have rooted many more cuttings taken from these plants – this has two benefits firstly it encourages the young plants to branch out and

secondly it provides me with additional cutting material. When you work it out, the original cutting produced a single growth which I cut off and rooted. Removing the leader caused the plant to produce two shoots, when they were long enough I did the same with them so two more cuttings taken encouraged four branches to form – that is what I call a win-win situation. I also find that cuttings taken from recently rooted plants take more quickly than cutting material from mature plants - not that willows are difficult to root.

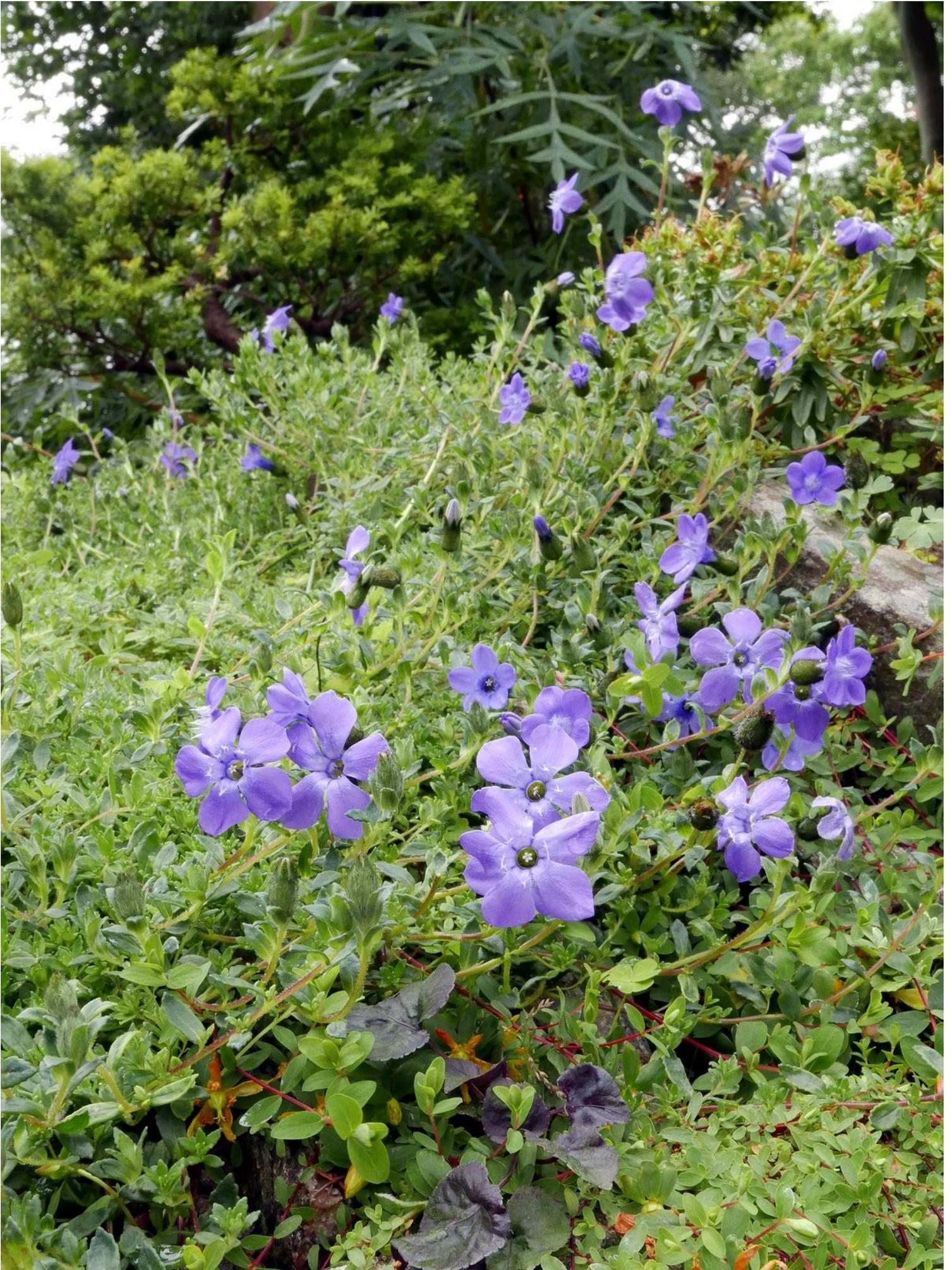
I did not landscape this trough up high in my normal way for two reasons – one, it was intended to be more a source of cutting material and secondly, some of the willows towards the back will create the height while the ones in the front are more ground hugging types.



Molly and Megan also enjoy the troughs and slab bed area - here there are many habitats and environments on a small scale.



**Cyananthus lobatus** is grows so vigorously over the end of this slab bed that it covered the two troughs below so I bent a bit of weld mesh wire to hold it allowing at least some light and air into the troughs below.



**Cyananthus lobatus**



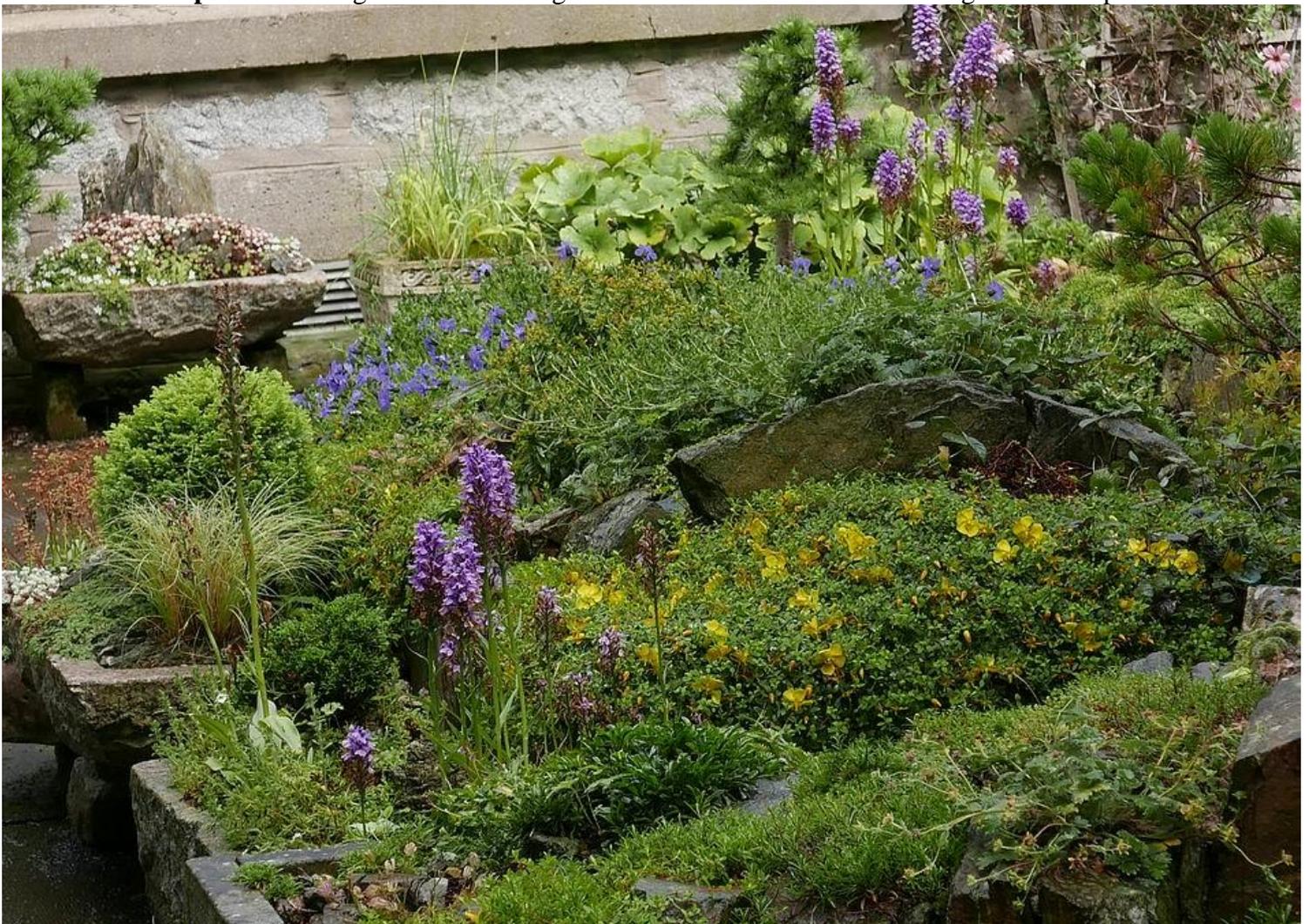
The silver saxifrage has finished flowering and I have removed many of the stems which will allow more light into the self-seeded *Dactylorhiza* leaves at the same time it allows us to see them better – I left a few of the saxifrage stems in the hope of getting some seed.



The bright green rosettes of *Saxifraga brunonis* are now in full growth and will soon produce flowers stems with masses of small yellow flowers later in the season. I cut off the stems of its companion, an encrusted saxifrage hybrid, after they flowered because it was obviously not setting seed.



**Erinus alpinus** is setting seed in this trough which it shares with some saxifrages and Sempervivum.



View across some of the slab beds and troughs.



In my view it is always better to plant up troughs with small plants, cuttings or even better by seeds as their roots will explore the depths much more efficiently, allowing the plants establish more naturally than using larger bought-in plants which, having luxuriated in nursery growing conditions, often struggle to establish roots in the harder growing conditions of a trough.



A number of the saxifrages in this trough suffered or died out during the excessively wet conditions of last winter - a few of those that survived have grown well with little set back while others have only a handful of rosettes left. I intend to use some of these as cuttings - I will take them later in the month and try and establish a new root system on them over the winter. I may even remove some of the weeds!



Troughs should be considered to be just like the garden - never a finished product but an environment that is in constant flux. We should enjoy and learn from this process of growth, death and renewal – observing what does well and trying to understand exactly what causes some plants to die - only then can we try and make changes to help them survive.



***Potentilla pulvinaris***



I grew *Potentilla pulvinaris* from seed and have a number of them growing in troughs and raised beds, many were established by scattering our own seed directly. I saw what looked to be a very similar plant growing on rocks at Hatcher Pass in Alaska, above right, but I read that species does not seem to grow in America. I have learned never to let the names get in the way of me enjoying plants when they give me the effect I want of mimicking nature in the garden.



Many of the *Ramonda* in this trough are also setting good seed - I will try sowing some of that onto the moss around the pond.



***Festuca glauca*** is an attractive dwarf grass for troughs.



The mini-troughs always look their best around this time of year with the new growths enjoying the moist conditions.



I am attracted to rock outcrops especially in mountain habitats – so often it is in those environments that the interesting plants grow and that is one of the features I try to imitate in the garden.



Here pink granite and concrete block come together to form an alpine type habitat where many plants can establish.



Viewed from the swing seat.



In between other jobs I keep going back to the bulb houses to do some more re-potting – I got some seed of **Allium shelkownikowii** from a friend in 2014 and this is the first time it has been re-potted - note firstly how deep some of the bulbs have taken themselves then check out, below, the number of bulbs I have to play with.



I sowed the seed into a 7cm square plastic pot and above I have arranged the bulbs in a 7cm square pile.



Re-potting them into an 11cm pot, taking care to ensure they are at the same depth that I found them, gives them more room to develop - I have also planted a number of them out into the sand bed in the bulb house.

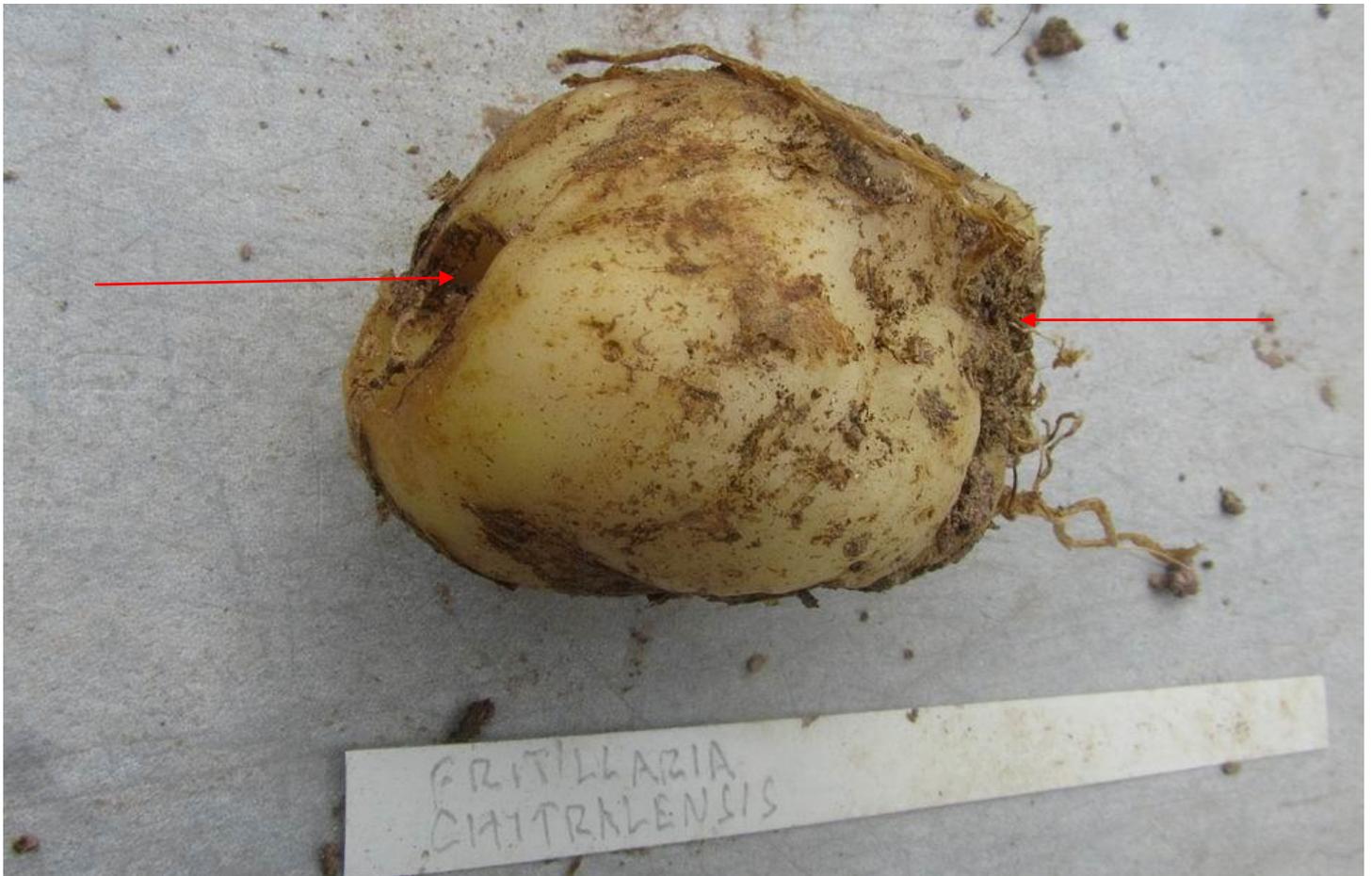


#### ***Crocus pallasii* corms**

I have been pleased by how well the majority of bulbs have grown in this sand plunge bed where they have nearly all produced larger bulbs than I am managing to get growing them in pots. Apart from the problem of keeping track of the names I am thinking of turning more of the bulb house plunges over to this type of growing – it would be much less work.



Narcissus bulbs – I have placed a standard plant label as a reference to show how large these have grown, possibly twenty percent larger than the same types grown in pots.



***Fritillaria chitralensis*** does form larger bulbs here I have indicated how the bulb forms around the base of the flower stem - arrows point to the hole through the bulb where the stem was, with the remains of the old root base at the bottom



21/06/16



I will end this week with an update on the pot of *Corydalis temulifolia* seedlings that I potted on en-masse, see [Bulb log 2516](#), to let you see how well they have grown, alongside it is a pot of *Codonopsis ovata*. Six weeks on these *Corydalis* are now big enough to be planted out directly into the garden - which I will do later this month - that is if I can find a space.....