



BULB LOG 11.....16<sup>th</sup> March 2016



I have been away down in East Anglia for the last three days and it would seem that I missed the Aberdeen spring!

The sun shone on both Sunday and Monday raising the temperatures into double figures and how things have moved in those three days.

I am glad that I watered the plants in the bulb houses before I left as they would need the moisture in those temperatures. I have not yet turned on the outside water supply so I am still watering from cans which gave me the opportunity to give them all a dilute liquid feed with tomato fertiliser.

We should approach feeding plants, including bulbs, much as we would like to be fed ourselves. We would not like it very much if we were starved for months then given one big feed before being starved again. To stay healthy we need to have a regular supply of food - little and often, that is exactly what the plants



need. When I replot the bulbs in summer I will have added bone meal to the potting mix – bone meal has Nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) which is released slowly over the winter and these are the nutrients that help build a good root system as well as supporting the early leaf growth that some bulbs form over the winter. Once the year turns and the daylight hours extend, each time I water I will add a dilute tomato type fertiliser at no more than half the recommended dilution. These liquid tomato fertilisers have lower N, moderate P and higher Potassium (K) levels, which is the best ratio for bulbs at this stage of growth. I try to get one of the liquid tomato fertilisers which also contains trace elements, often in the form of seaweed extract. As the flowers of the early flowering bulbs, such as Narcissus and Crocus start to fade, I will switch to sulphate of potash (K) which we can get in a soluble white powdered form. Potassium is the nutrient that will help the bulb build flowering buds for next year. I simply sprinkle a small amount of the powder onto the gravel topdressing of each pot so that every time I water some will be taken into solution to feed the plants. Depending on how long the bulbs stay in leaf I may add a second application of potassium after about four weeks. Once the bulb leaves have grown they do not require much nitrogen; in fact too much nitrogen late in the season will cause extra 'soft' growth of both leaves and the bulbs which can bring problems – bulbs fed with potassium will be small, firm and flower well.



**Corydalis nudicaulis**

I will continue feeding bulbs like the Corydalis and Fritillaria that are still making leaf growth with the tomato fertiliser for a while yet before I also switch them to a potassium only supplement.



**Corydalis nudicaulis**



### Sand Plunge in Bulb House

I continue to be surprised by what is appearing in the sand plunge bed in the bulb house. As I put all sorts of bulbs and seeds in without any labels or record it is only when they come into flower that we can know what they are.

Down in East Anglia I saw large clumps of *Hermodactylus tuberosus* (now included in *Iris*) flowering like mad but the only way we can grow it is under glass - likewise *Eranthis cilicica* is not hardy in our open garden but was growing happily in the warmer drier gardens down south.

While I admired these plants with some envy, I got my own back during my talk when I showed *Meconopsis*, a plant they cannot grow so well, that self-seeds freely around our garden.

There are some plants that will grow well in your garden while you will struggle to keep others alive. The secret of being a good gardener is to discover and accept those that do well in your conditions and learn to enjoy plants in other people's gardens.





***Eranthis cilicica***



**Colchicum szovitsii**



**Reticulate Iris**



### **Tecophilaea cyanocrocus**

Above: the first Tecophilaea cyanocrocus to flower is in the sand plunge – it is well ahead those in the pots which show no signs of the flower buds yet.

This can all change very quickly if we get some more sunshine as the buds will be there just waiting for the conditions to warm up.



Also in this sand plunge the first flowers for the year on this pretty white Muscari cultivar that I received a few years ago. I also have a number of these planted out in one of the raised slab beds where I can just see the flower buds appearing between the leaves.

See more of the sand plunge bed and the bulb house in a new [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#).



**Fritillaria House**



The Fritillaria House is not exclusively for fritillaries any more – I use it for a number of other bulbs and it is especially useful to have somewhere to bring plants, like *Eranthis pinnatifida* and *Erythronium caucasicum*, which spend most of the year in the adjacent open plunge frame, under cover while they are in flower.

The warm few days of weather has brought the flowers of *Fritillaria pinardi* and *Fritillaria stenantha* out.

***Fritillaria pinardi* and  
*Fritillaria stenantha***



***Erythronium dens-canis* and *Erythronium caucasicum***

I have also moved these pots of *Erythronium dens-canis* and *Erythronium caucasicum* from the frame to the glasshouse while they are in flower. This is a special form of *Erythronium dens-canis* from the most easterly part of its distribution and I am particularly keen to get it to set seed hence the temporary added protection.



Unlike all the other forms that I have seen which have a dark violet pollen, these ***Erythronium dens-canis*** have a brown/ yellow pollen.



**Leucojum  
vernum**

This group of *Leucojum vernum* seedlings displays some variation - mostly in the colour of the ovary and the spots on the petals.



**Leucojum vernum**



**Leucojum vernum**



**Bulb Bed**



**Crocus sieberi tricolor**



Back in September I showed how I lift and divide Dactylorhiza both in [Bulb Log 3715](#) and in some Video Diaries.

[Lifting Dactylorhiza part 1](#)  
[Lifting Dactylorhiza part 2](#)  
[splitting](#)

Once I have removed the new tubers I replant the old stem still attached to the old tuber and hopefully, as the stem dies back over the autumn and winter, more new tubers will form.

Now it is time to reveal what the results are, I have completed a new video diary showing the reveal.

[Lifting Dactylorhiza part 3](#)

Have more tubers formed?



### **Dactylorhiza tubers**

As you can see the stems and old tubers have withered away but not before a new cluster of growths formed around the base.



Most have produced a number of new offsets typically four as shown on this one.

It is now one year since I uploaded my first Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement to my [YouTube Channel](#) and just like the Bulb Log it was my intention to do it for just one year to see how it would be received. The Bulb Log is now in its 14<sup>th</sup> year of course and with over ten thousand views for the videos it would seem that it is also worth my efforts to continue with the video supplements. Thank you to all of you readers and viewers for without your support I would have stopped a long time ago.



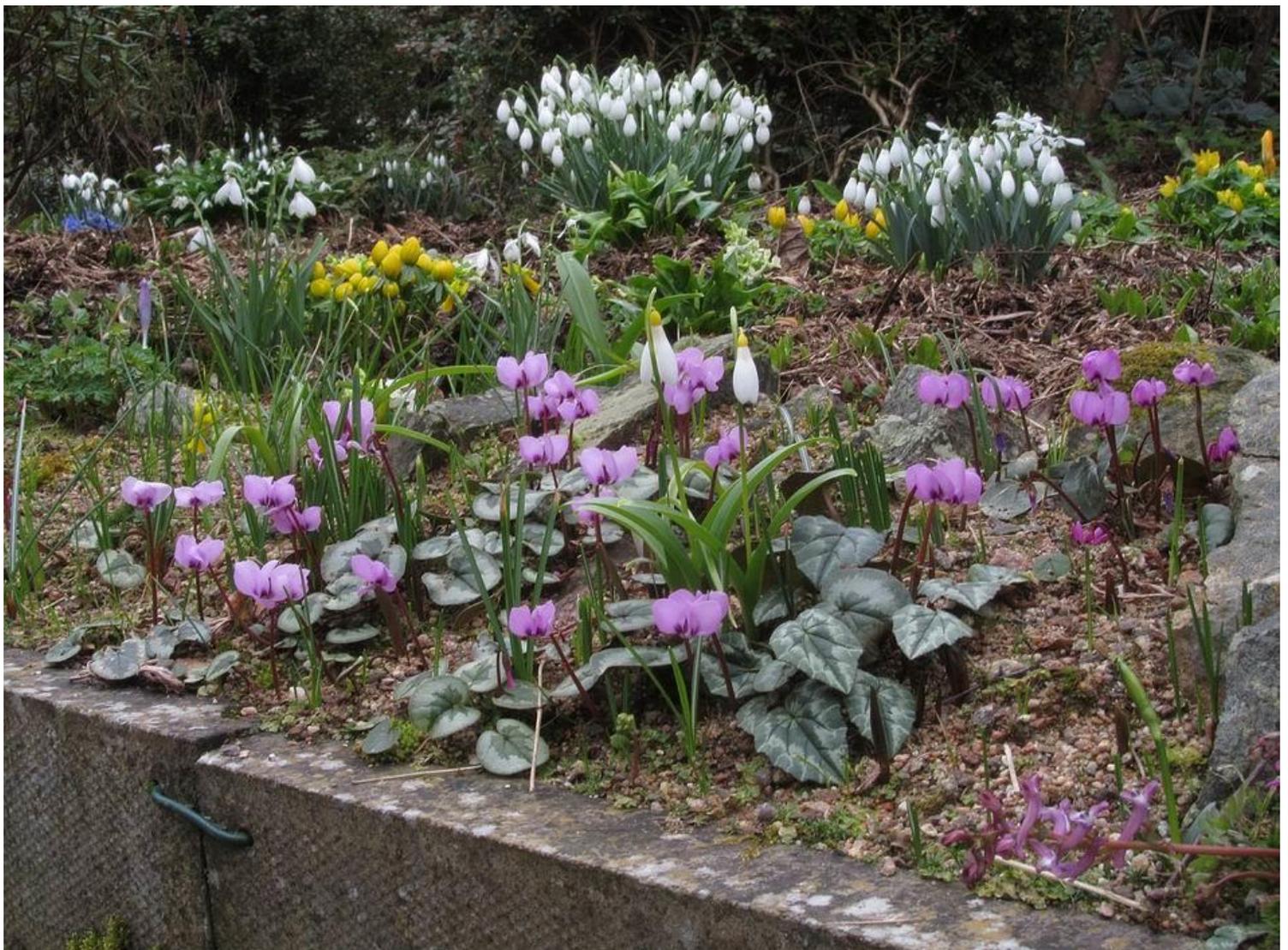
I am excited by the potential of this moss covered rock in our frozen pond. Last year I placed a few *Pinguicula grandiflora* plants in the moss and some flowered – now I look forward to seeing how they have fared over the winter as well as thinking what else I might try in this habitat.



Moss is usually considered a problem in gardens but I am interested in how it can enhance the environment.



A number of mosses grow at the shaded end of this sand bed and I have previously tried to remove them. My attempts have been futile and the moss always returns so now I am wondering how I can utilise it. I will start by observing how the bulbs especially the Cyclamen seedlings cope with the growth of moss.



To see what is currently flowering in the sand and bulb beds check this [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#)



***Scoliopus bigelovii***

To finish off this week I will leave you with the first of the *Scoliopus bigelovii* to flower.....