



BULB LOG 01.....4<sup>th</sup> January 2017



It seems appropriate that the first of the Snowdrops to flower in our garden (an early form of *Galanthus elwesii* I think) should feature on the cover of the first Bulb Log for 2017. I am often asked how much time it takes me to write a log - my routine is to try and have taken sufficient photographs over the weekend, sometimes I will work on them, selecting and resizing, on the Sunday if the weather is bad, if not that is the task for Monday. As I work through the pictures I try and develop a thread to follow and may start to draft out the text. On Tuesday I like to finish the writing and layout so that on Wednesday morning I can read it through again – then if I am happy it is over to Maggi for a quick check of my spelling then around mid-day on Wednesday I upload it to the site. There are periods of the year when there is so much of interest to record that I may take in excess of 300 pictures a week - the task then is to whittle them down to about the 30 images I will include. Then there are times like now when not much has changed over the week so I have to search for something of interest – times like these are good for me as it teaches me to look carefully around the garden and appreciate what we still have in mid-winter.



As we start into another year I wonder what variations to the annual cycle of seasons and growth I will observe and it struck me that the one thing that is always going to be different is that I have learned from the experiences and lessons of the previous year and as a result this gardener matures as the garden matures.

I am immediately struck with how advanced the growth of many plants is this year so there is an urgency for me to get the beds tidied and the mulch applied before the early bulbous plants are too advanced.



In the top picture there are some very prominent *Galanthus* shoots and if you look to the right you will see lots of tiny bent shoots also emerging.

The lower picture shows some of the many equally advanced shoots of *Leucojum vernum*.



The weather is swinging between unseasonably mild conditions one day followed by snow and ice the next so I get the experience of working outside without a jacket tidying the beds which still have the remains of yesterday's snow.

I take my cue for when to remove last year's leaves from the hellebores from the plants, so as soon as I see the new growths pushing through I cut away the old growth. If you look down from above you will observe that the old leaves fall outwards opening up the centre of the plant for the new growths so you could, if you wish, leave the leaves to die back naturally over the coming months as the new growths take over but as I have other bulbs planted around this bed I remove them now.





With the old leaves removed the new growths and surrounding plantings will get plenty of light, also you will see below that I have started to spread a mulch across this bed.





Another bed needs tidying and awaits my attention. I cut this *Rhododendron makinoi* back quite severely as it had spread over more of the ground than we were prepared to allow. When I took all the *Fritillaria* out of pots and planted them directly into the sand plunge of the bulb house I spread some of the old potting mix here and you will also see a pile of shredded prunings.

One of the things I am learning as I mature is how to minimise my labour and so when I have been doing the winter shredding instead of carting all the shavings off to the compost area I have simply piled them in appropriate places on the beds. The shavings will soon compost down enough to be used as a mulch so in late in January or in February I will just

rake them out across the beds saving all the effort of carting the material to and from the compost heaps. This is only suitable for the winter pruning when the growth in the beds has retreated underground.



I made this pile of shreds about a month ago and it is now ready to be raked out.



Here is an interesting mix of old and new foliage, from the left the new leaves of *Colchicum* emerge through these soft *Celmisia* leaves which remain green for well over a year before they eventually die back – you can see the oldest leaves lying on the ground below are turning yellow so I will remove them, on the right is another hellebore plant.



Here again are hellebore leaves which I will soon remove to make way for the new spring growths. This form of *Cyclamen hederifolium* has lovely silver-grey leaves which emerged a few months ago after the flowers and will add decoration until next summer.



Tempted out by the mild weather we have a few *Hepatica* flowers taking their chances well ahead of the main flowering which will occur in a few months time.



When the weather swings back to winter I can retreat into the glasshouses where strangely much of the flowering is not so advanced.



Narcissus seed sown around 3 to 4cms deep in late summer is germinating nicely and while it is growing it is important that I keep it both watered and fed during the milder periods. I feed by adding a small amount, around  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the recommended dose, of liquid tomato type fertiliser every time I water. I do the same for all the bulbs in growth.



***Eranthis pinnatifida***

The *Eranthis pinnatifida* growing in an open frame came into growth early this season so I moved them under glass where the flowers would not be adversely affected by the weather or eaten by slugs.

Two seedling *Narcissus* show the variations that appear when I sow our own seed. Hybridising is inevitable when growing as many of this group in close proximity as we do, even the hybrids hybridise so the parentage of many of these can be quite complex.





I particularly like the one on the left above and shown again here, with a full frilled pure white corona – it is not dissimilar to the one I selected and named ‘Craigton Chorister’ some years ago.

Below the first flower on **Narcissus ‘Craigton Chorister’** is just opening.





Above and below are two views to show the progress of the flowering in the sand bed –the first flowers that opened are just starting to go over but there are plenty more buds coming along so be prepared for lots more images of Narcissus in the coming weeks.





1

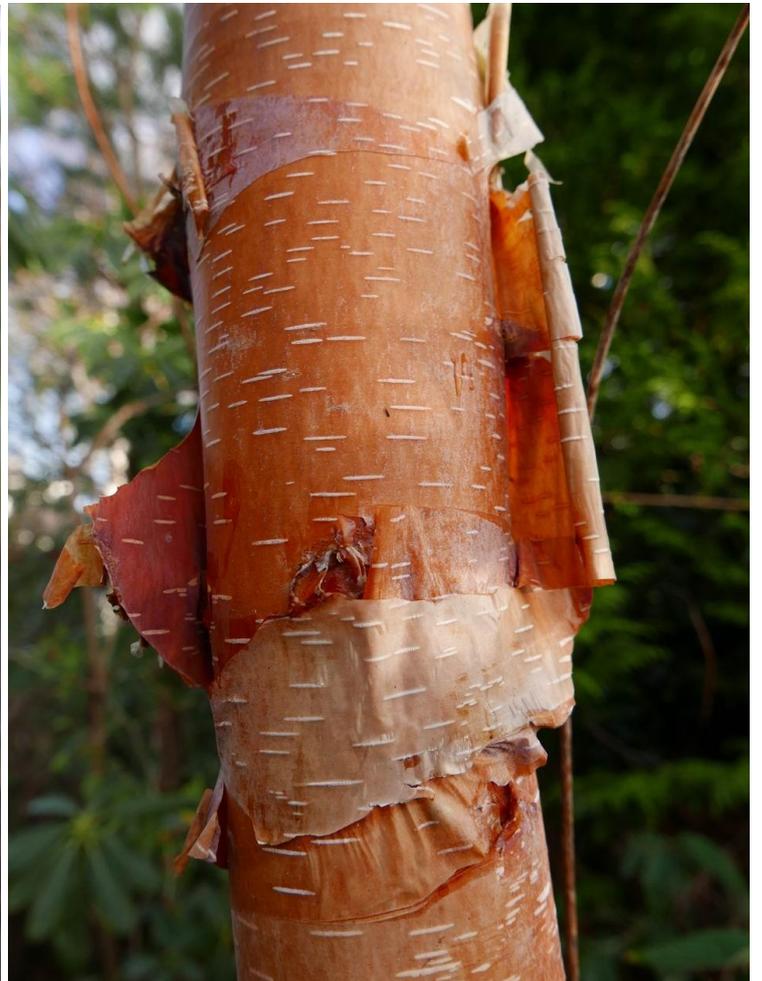


2

The tree bark is there all year round but becomes more noticeable in the winter when there is less distraction from the foliage and flowers: how good are you at recognising the tree from its bark? Answers below.



3



4



5



6



7



8



### Answers

- 1=Acer japonicum
- 2=Acer griseum
- 3=Laburnum
- 4=Betula utilis
- 5= Sorbus hupehensis
- 6=Acer 'Osakazuki'
- 7= Rhododendron thompsonii
- 8=Betula utilis var. jacquemontii

Who can resist peeling away the exfoliating bark from *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* to reveal the contrasting colours?

While doing this I kept seeing landscapes in the sheets of bark I peeled

away so decided to enhance them a little with bits from the contrasting red barked form to create the small collage below which I posted on Facebook as my New Year image.



*Betula utilis* landscape – bark collage.



**Betula utilis var. jacquemontii** stands proud in the garden and is one of the trees that I will be reducing the canopy of during January.

Once again I thank Len Rhind for his work in keeping the [Bulb Log Index](#) updated and generously making it available to everyone – click the link for the latest version.

I wish all my readers a very happy and healthy good gardening year.....