



BULB LOG 20.....17th May 2017

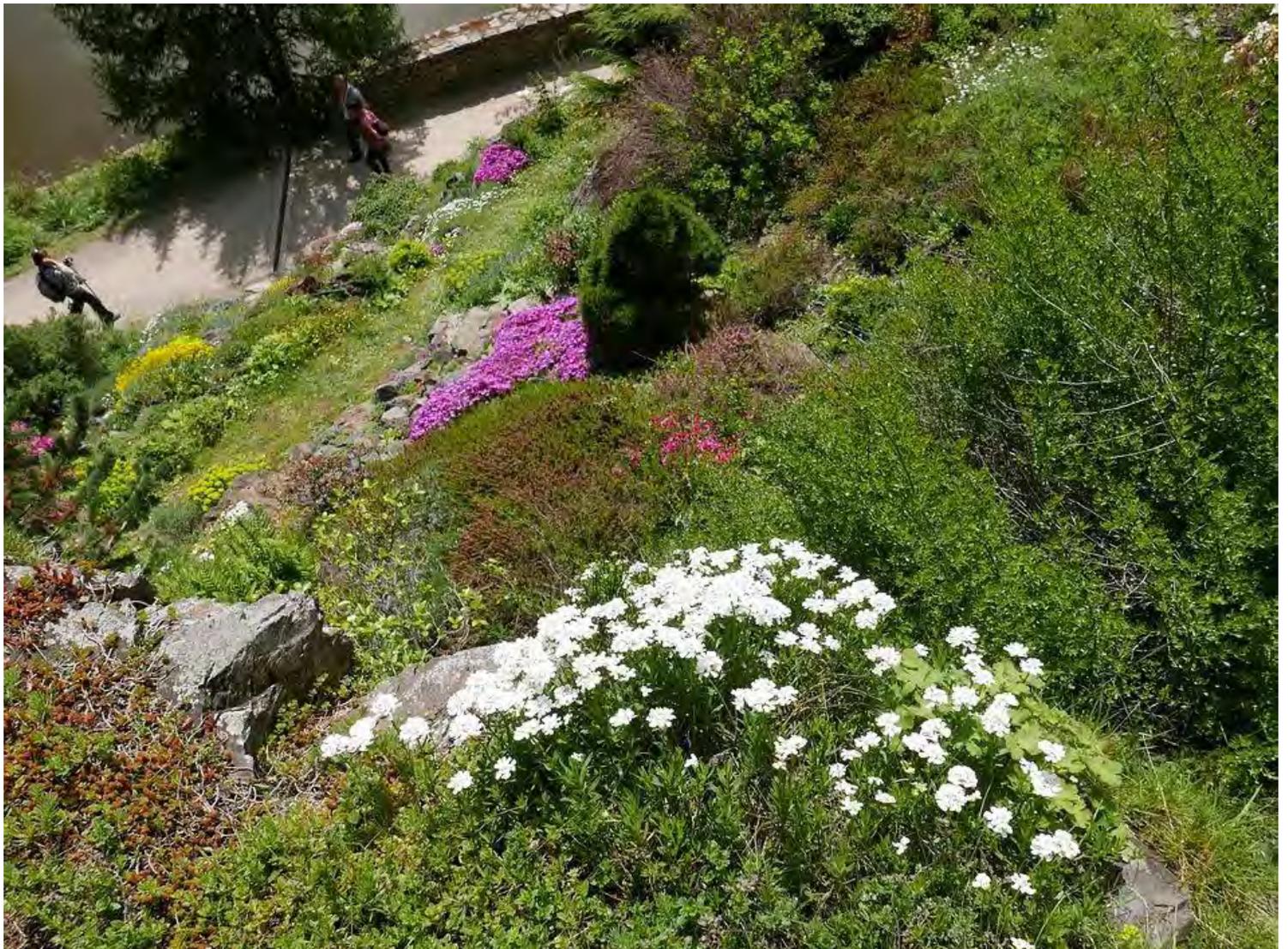
Czech International Conference Special



As I have been away from the garden, enjoying myself at the Czech International Conference, this week's Bulb Log will take the form of a photo essay with some of the many pictures I have taken along with some of the observations and lessons that I have learned over the week. Around 140 delegates from 17 countries took part so it was truly an international event; everyone mixed well so the fun and friendship was infectious. There was a good programme of lectures but for many the excitement was to see the Gardens and the two days of lectures were punctuated by two visits to Pruhonice Park which has possibly one of the oldest rock gardens that exhibits the bold rock work that is so typical of the Czech gardens. The scale of this garden is massive and it takes advantage of the steep slopes that exist around the high rock that the castle is built upon. I love the way that the cultivated blends in with the natural plants, including grasses and especially on the steep rock cliffs and crevices some of which were enhanced by good rock construction over one hundred years ago.









On one of these steep slopes I was delighted to see the original plant of **Pinus heldreichii 'Smidtii'** - it is from this witches' broom that all the plants in cultivation are derived.













Vojtech Holubec

The area of large rock work sits above a pond and looks very natural as you walk across the grass; round one side of the house are a number of troughs where many treasurers grow; in the shade at the far side of the house the atmosphere and style changes to a woodland type with Rhododendrons and trilliums among the plants.

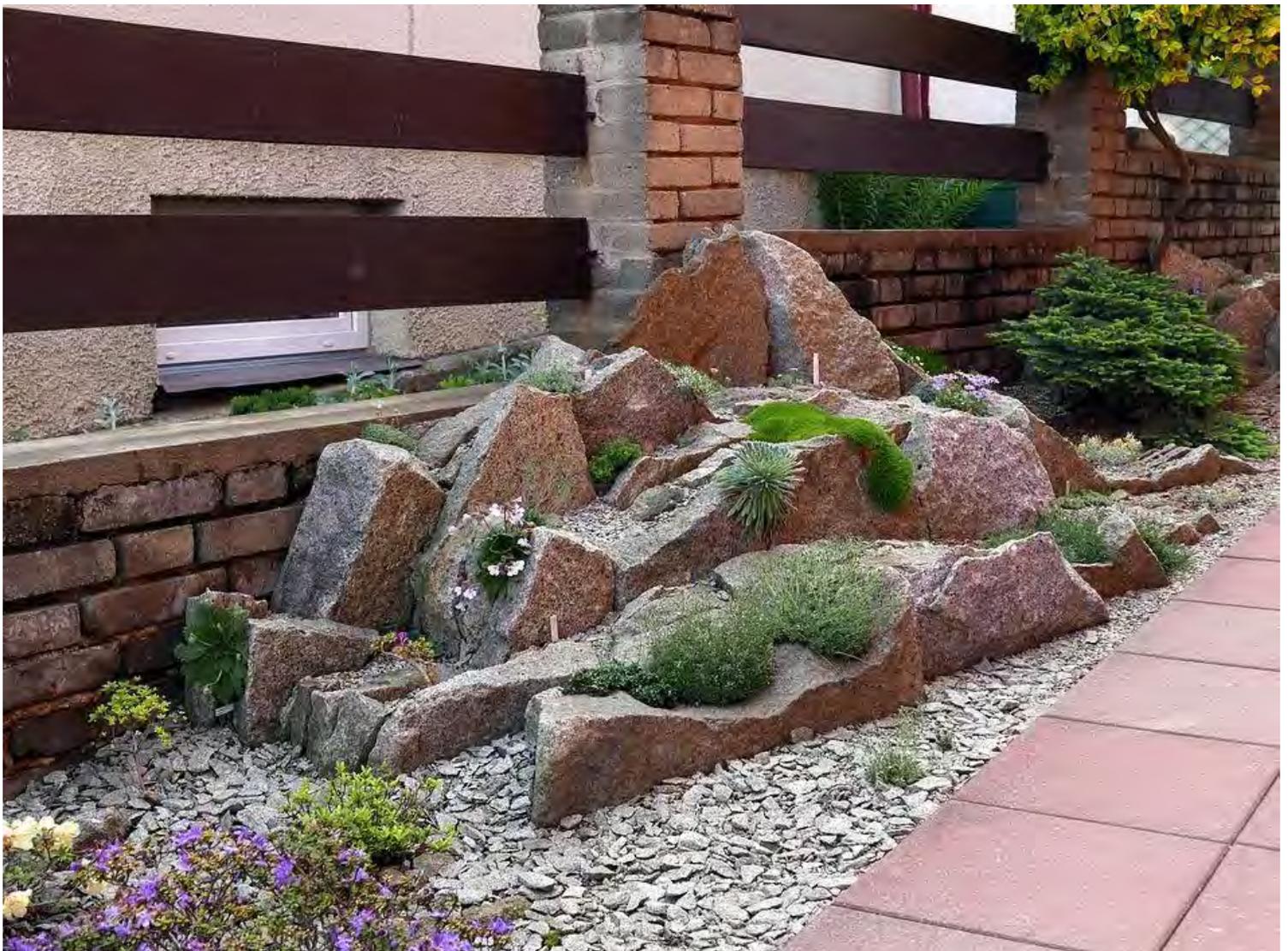






Petr Divis

Here is a wonderful example of how to use granite when making a crevice garden there are number of small areas that illustrate how such a style would sit comfortably in even the smallest of gardens.





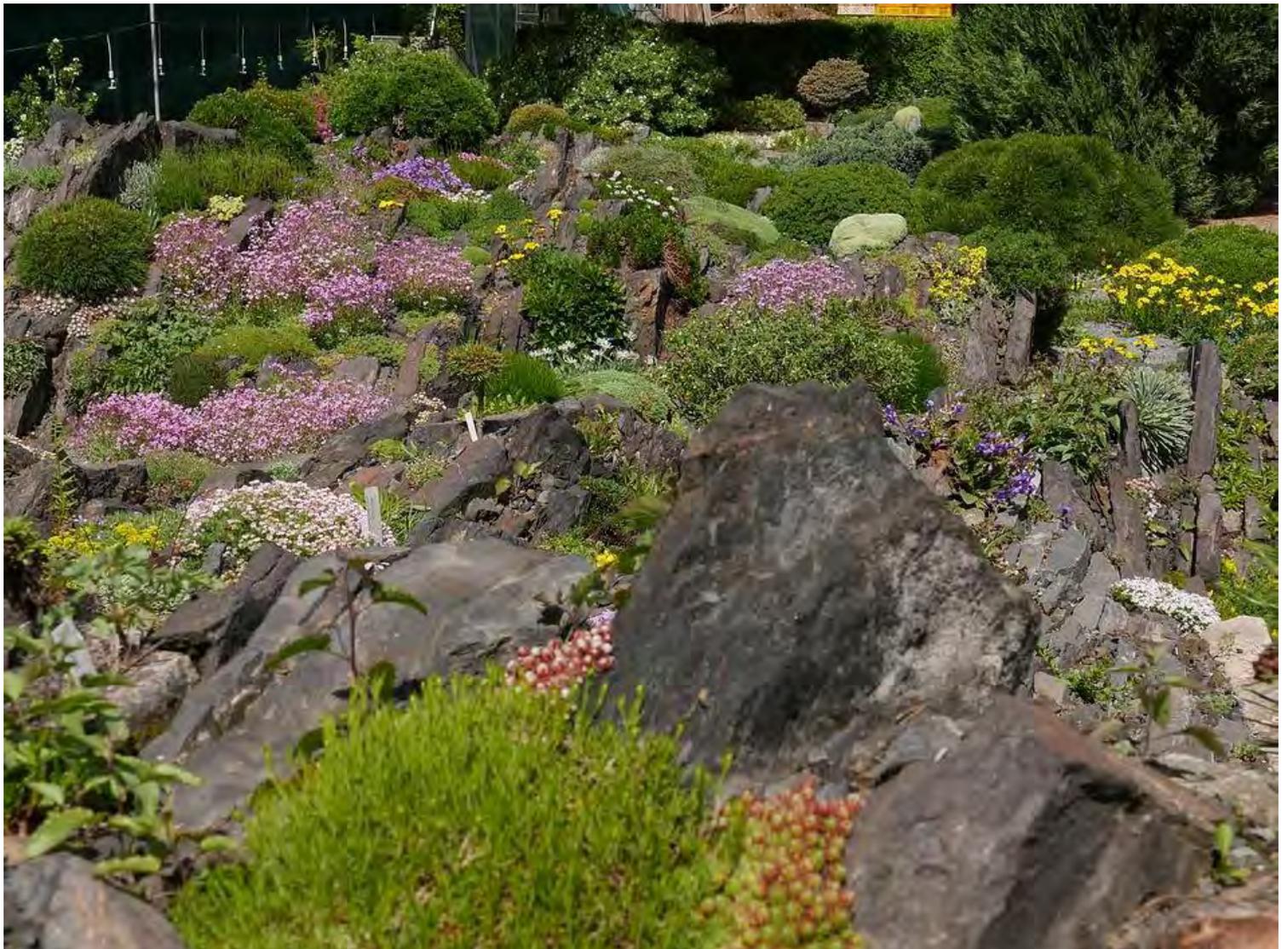
The large new area of granite towers over your head and clever use of the aspect of the rocks creates shade in this fully exposed site.





**Jiri
Papousek**

This is an impressive garden with many raised beds scattered across the ground allowing you to walk around and view the wealth of colourful flowers enjoying the sunshine.



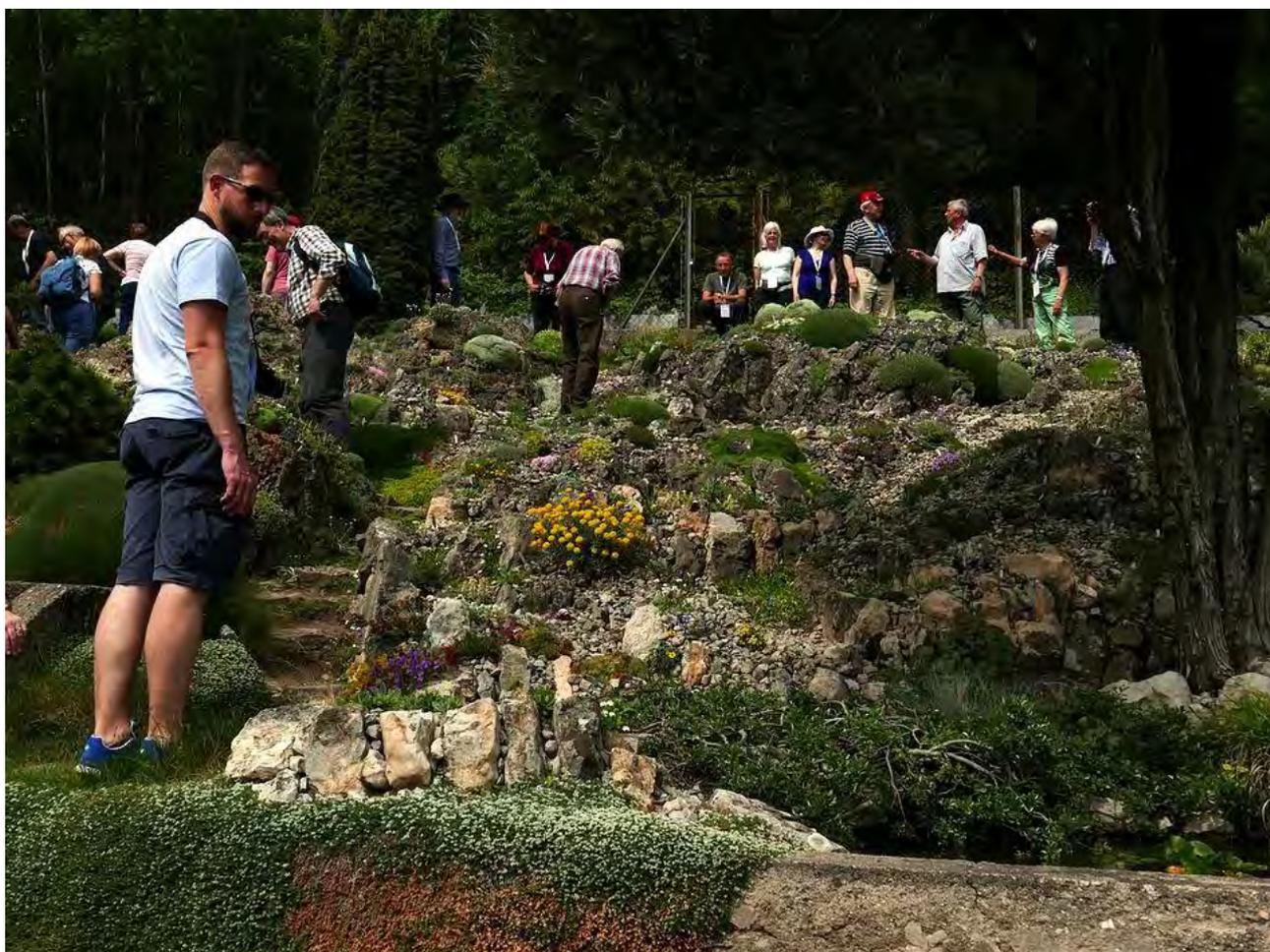


There is also an area under trees planted up with woodland plants but I think the most impressive feature here is the long narrow tufa wall that sits under a cover along one side of the house. This is a world class display showing the perfect use of tufa for growing some of the most challenging alpiners.



**Stanislav
Cepicka**

This is a well-established tufa crevice garden on a very steep slope where plants thrive in full exposure and with lots of loving attention from the owner.







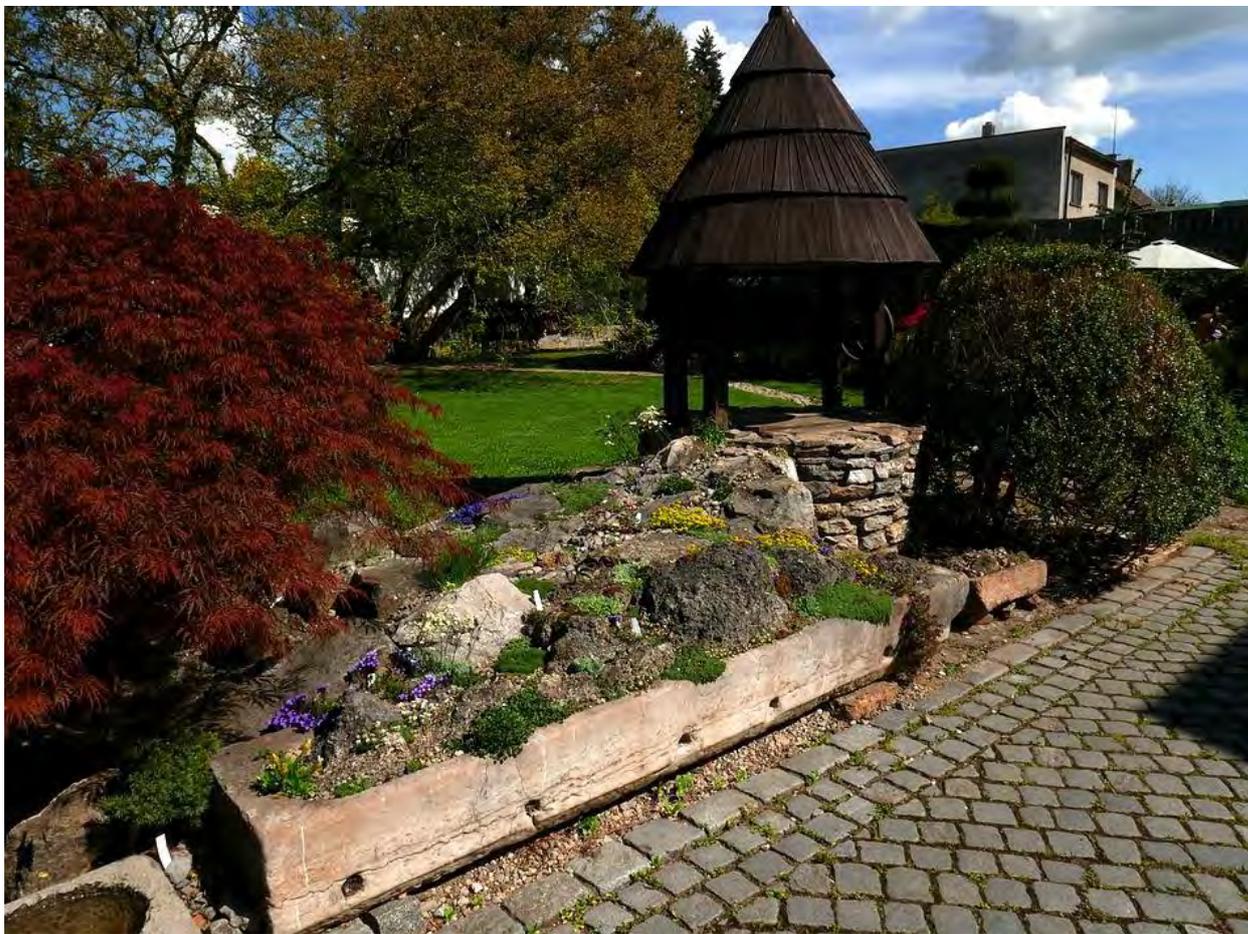


**Zdenek
Zvolanek**

The master of the crevice has his garden on a very long steep slope leading up to an old quarry face and wonderful plants are to be seen everywhere - but not to the exclusion of some of the more common alpines that seed around providing colourful highlights that lead your eye around.







Jiri Pospisilovi

This is a beautiful garden with a large area of grass and a row of large magnolias which were long past flowering but must have been a magnificent sight.



Troughs and a beautifully constructed rock garden sit beneath the shade of some large trees, productive beds provide fruit and vegetables and plenty of facilities to make this a very enjoyable garden to spend time in.





Martin Brejnik

Four years ago Martin told us of his plans to extend his canyon and now we see the finished construction where he has dug down into the ground to provide both more planting space and shade and cooler conditions for plants to grow in. While the newer areas have yet to be planted there are many well established plants in the older part of the garden.





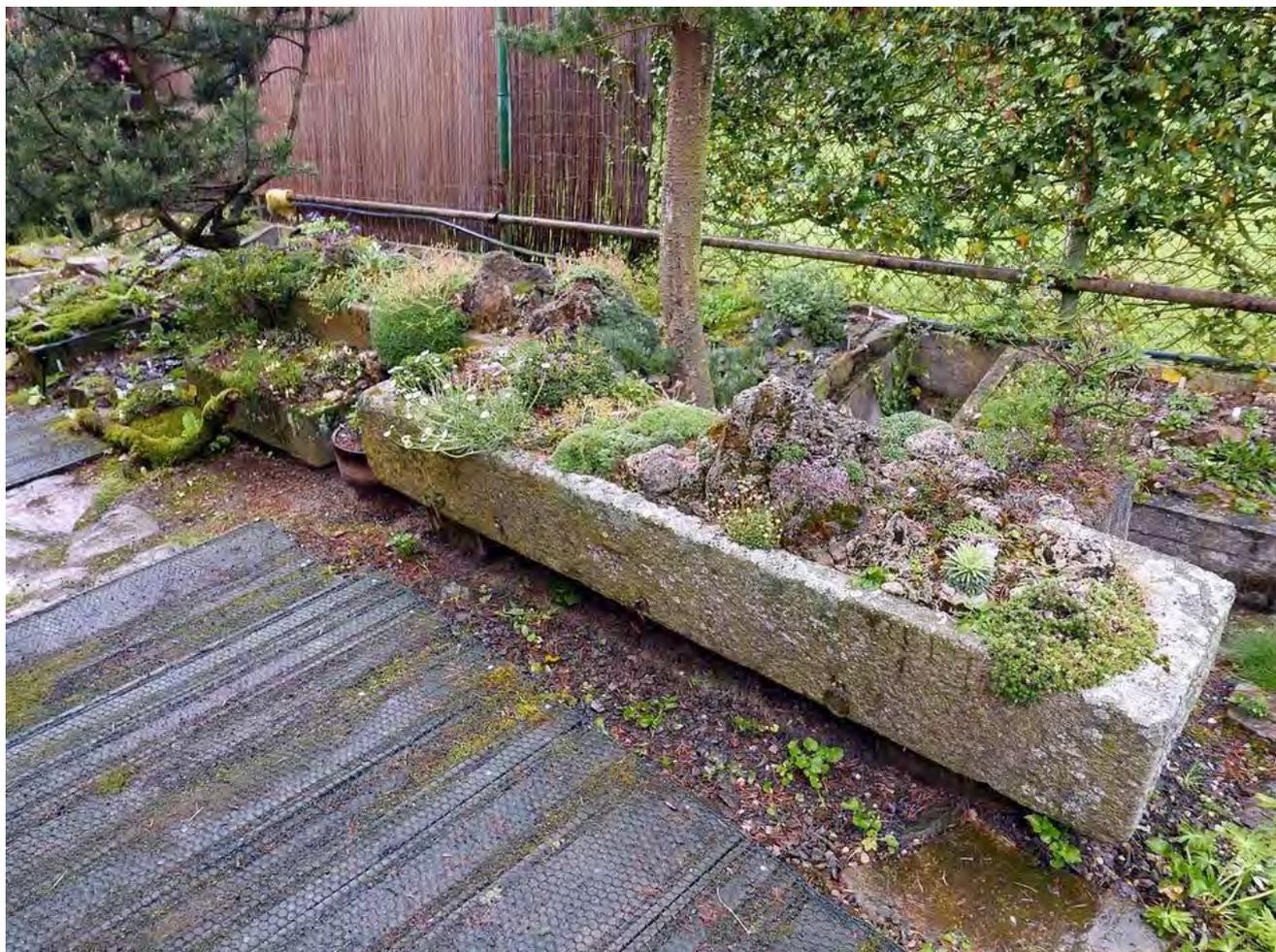




Jiri Sladek

This garden sits at a higher elevation than the others we visited, on the edge of a wooded hill, giving it a cool moister atmosphere where Rhododendrons and woodland plants could thrive. The layout has a Japanese feel which carefully composes many beautiful vistas through the trees and shrubs.











I was very aware of how different the hot dry summer climate is to ours and so the plants that thrive in the hot continental climate for the Czechs are unlikely to do so well in our cool wet maritime conditions and vice versa. One of the many advantages of the crevice style is that in a well-designed landscape there are many areas of shade even in an exposed south facing aspect careful placing of the rocks will create areas that will be shaded for at least part of the day. Even in a small landscape some areas are in full sun while others are in shade. Also many of the gardens used trees and shrubs to cast shade and it was incredible how different the temperature felt as you walked in and out of the shade.

I also wondered how the plants here can survive through the hot dry conditions of their summers when the same plants growing in some of our troughs and raised beds start to suffer after a week of dry weather. The explanation could have been down to the crevice style planting where the rocks cover the ground completely but that is exactly the way we have landscaped our raised beds so there must be another factor. After a night's sleep I came up with a hypothesis which could explain why the very same plants that can quickly suffer drought in our garden seem to be able to tolerate long hot dry weather in the Czech gardens. We have a moist climate with fairly regular precipitation so the surface soil remains moist and cool most of the time that means the plant roots are encouraged to grow near the surface even when planted in crevices while in the hotter drier Czech gardens the plant roots have to grow deep down in search of those cool moist conditions so they are more resilient to dry periods.

Time to prepare this Bulb Log has been short because I only arrived home, feeling very tired, late last night so I will share more pictures and thoughts from the wonderful Czech International Conference in coming weeks.

I hope this small selection of the many hundreds of pictures I took will give you a flavour of some of the wonderful Czech gardens