



SRGC -----

# Bulb Log Diary

-----

ISSN 2514-6114

Pictures and text © Ian Young

BULB LOG 36.....6<sup>th</sup> September 2017





**Crocus nudiflorus** spreads by sending out stolons from the parent corm and it loves moving through the sand plunges. Originally I plunged one mesh basket of the white form **Crocus nudiflorus 'Orla'** and now there are few of the mesh baskets in this plunge without a visitor from this crocus, in addition there are self-sown seedlings most of which are the typical purple of this species but we do have a number of white forms from this seed in the garden now.



A number of *Crocus nudiflorus* shoots are appearing through the pine needle mulch which falls naturally from the small pine tree on the raised wall – a few years ago I planted a single corm there I had found in the sand plunge.

## Daylight robbery

Frustratingly mice are still feeding on the crocus corms – the new growing corm may have a smell at this time of year that attracts the rodents or maybe the emerging flower shoot draws their attention to the tasty treat lying below. This week we have lost four pots of *Crocus vallicola* and two of *Crocus nudiflorus* -I do recommend that



you put wire mesh under (weighed down by) the gravel which gives a degree of protection however I found a few pots had no mesh so I just laid it on top of the gravel as you can see they just moved the wire mesh protector aside.



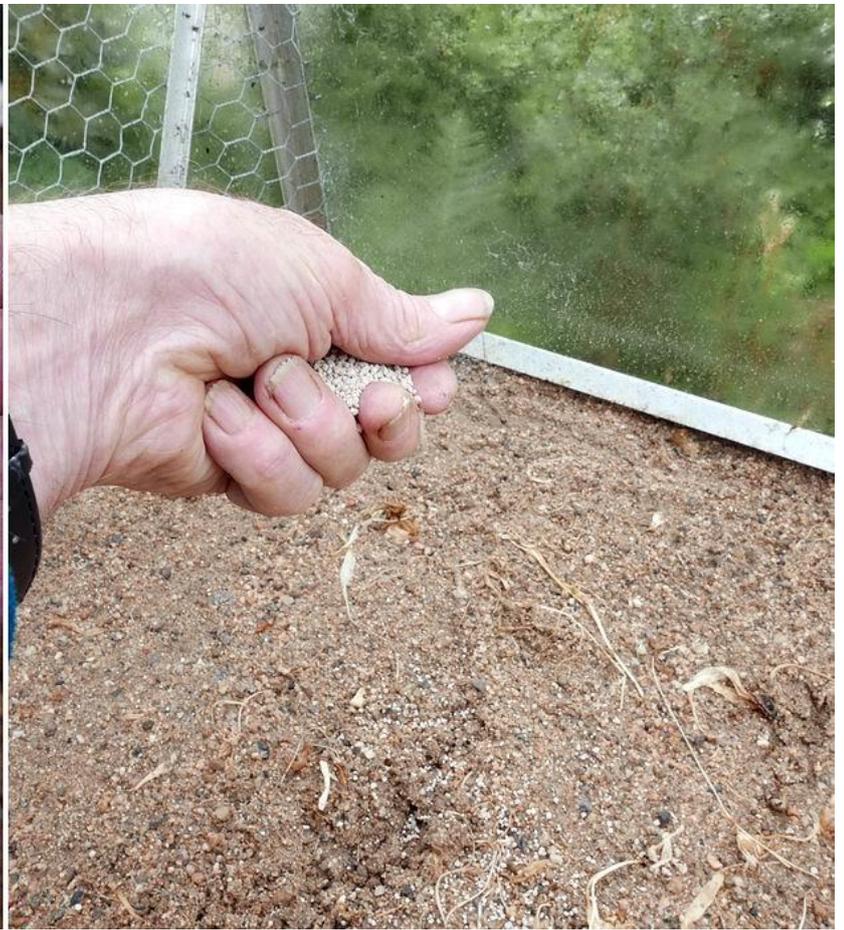
So far we have not had any crocus corms eaten in this sand bed since I covered it in cobbles as a deterrent last year.



As regular readers will know the 1<sup>st</sup> of September is the day I water the bulb houses after the summer dry period.

I have been moving more bulbs from pots into the sand beds where the bulbs are growing in nothing but sharp sand. As part of my feeding regime I am scattering some pelletised NPK 7-7-7 on the sand before I water.

My reasoning behind this is that even though it may be some time before we see any growth above ground now they are watered their root system will start to grow this requires nitrogen and phosphorous and the better the roots grow the better the bulbs will grow.



On the other hand I do not want to over feed so a small handful lightly scattered covers each section of approximately 1500mm x 600mm.



It takes patience to ensure that the dry sand is soaked all the way through, an occasional prod showed that while the sand looked soaked from the top it was still dry 5cms down. Leaving it for a while then giving another soaking allows the moisture to work its way downwards.

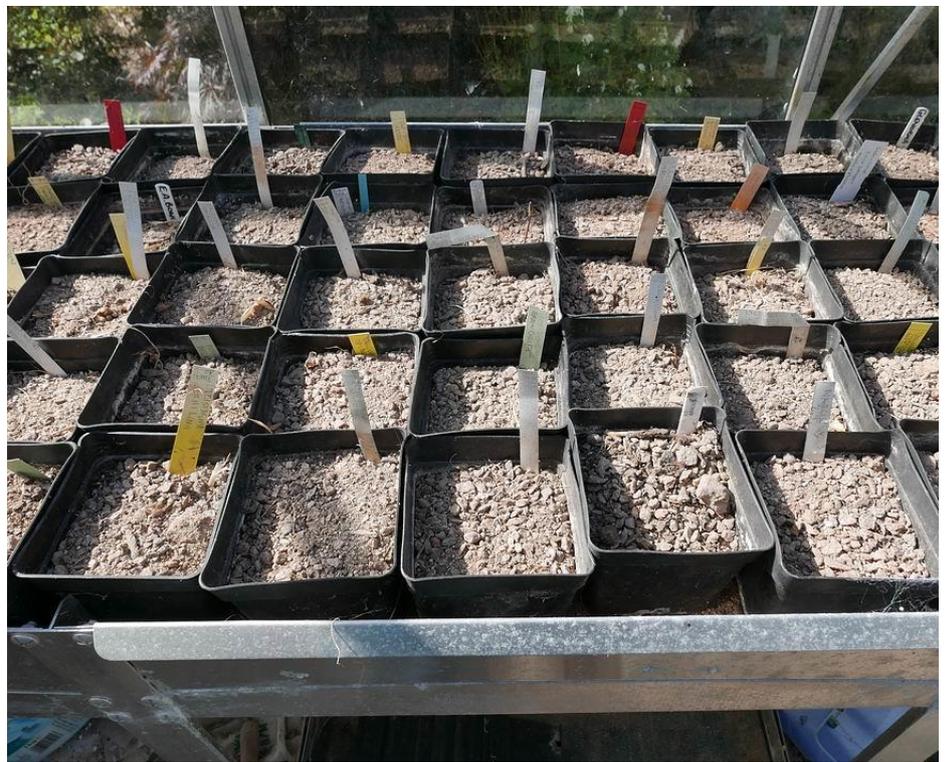


It is interesting to observe the difference between sand in the newly filled bed with the ones that were established a few years ago. It took longer for the surface puddles to drain through the newly filled bed and this is because with every watering a drainage structure forms in the sand by means of the finer particles washing down leaving the larger grains on the surface.



Throughout the season I rake the surface of the sand after every watering firstly to prevent a crust forming - a crust, often called panning, would prevent water penetrating evenly.

Raking also prevents a growth of moss which would form on the fine material that gathers where the water temporarily pools.



A flower shoot rises from a completely dry pot of *Scilla obtusifolia* indicating that the autumn storm is due. I apply the same routine for the bulbs in pots with a good flood applied to each one and repeated until they and the sand bed below are soaked all the way through.



While I am trying to reduce the number of mature bulbs that I grow in pots to a manageable level I intend to keep one bulb house at least for the pots as a reference as these will retain their labels with the source information.



Outside I am also reducing the number of boxes of bulbs that we grow to a level that that supports the garden's needs. For years I have grown two boxes of **Eranthis 'Guinea Gold'** to make it easy to replant them every year and speed up the rate of propagation.



Now I am planting out the contents of one of those boxes into the garden.

**Eranthis  
'Guinea Gold'**



The irregular shaped tubers of **Eranthis 'Guinea Gold'** can be broken up to speed-up the rate of increase but I have always preferred to wait until they separate naturally, which they do after a few years, or until the join is so small that rot is not likely to attack the wounded surfaces.



#### **Oxalis laciniata**

We tend to use the term 'bulb' loosely and not in the true botanical sense, to cover most underground swollen storage structures. Whatever the true botanical term is these structures are fascinating to study - these shrimp like forms of *Oxalis laciniata* which can be broken up and each bit will form a new plant, even the individual scales can be broken off and will form a new plant.

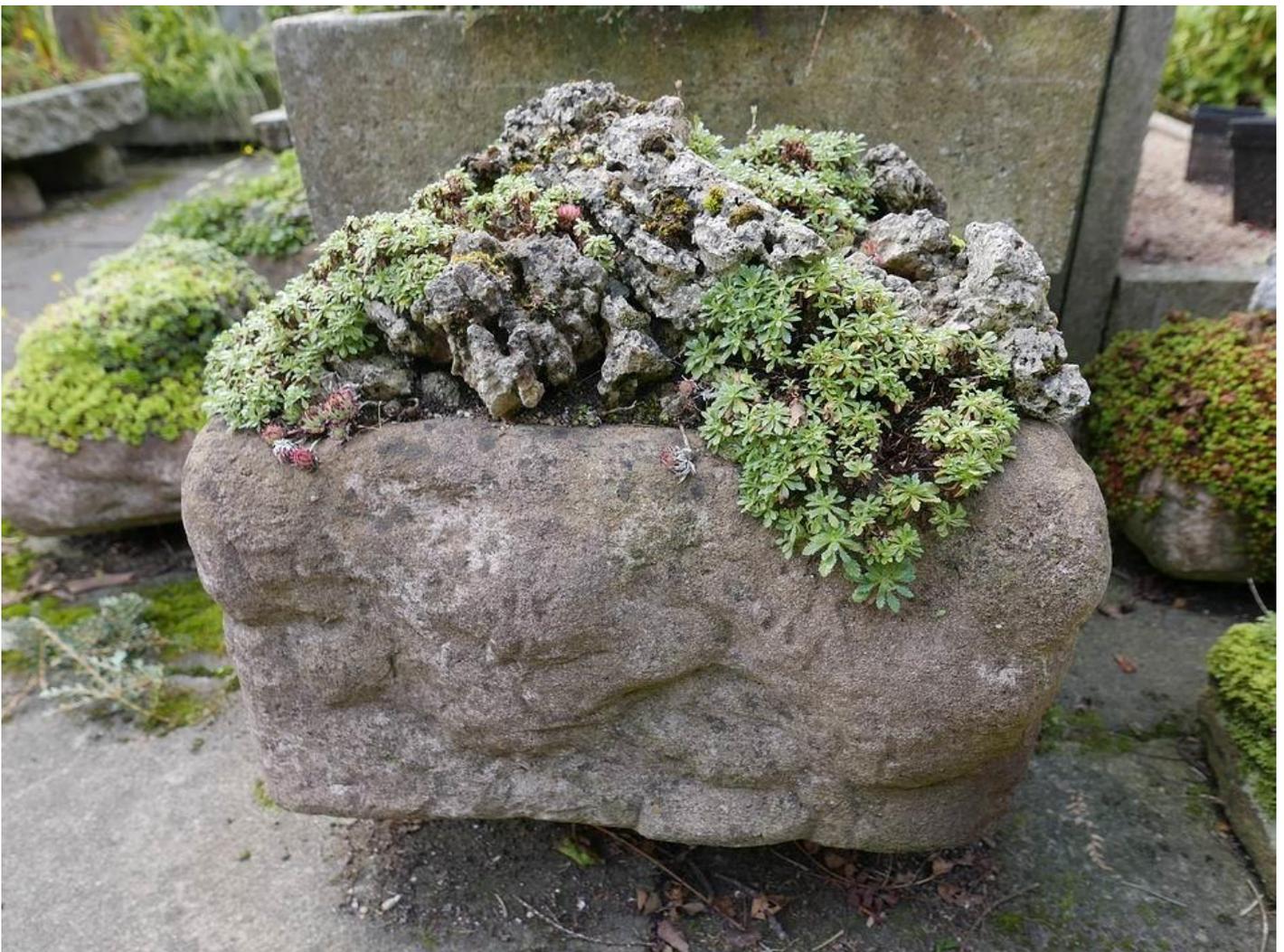


It is time to give this **Erinus alpinus** trough a tidy up by removing the dried stems and collecting the ripe seed.



**Erinus alpinus** seed

*Erinus alpinus* must be one of the easiest of alpine plants to grow as it happily seeds itself around producing its masses of bright flowers in the spring.



Now tidied you can see the plants and how they are seeding onto the limestone rock – I landscaped this trough with limestone then simply scattered *Erinus alpinus* seeds over the surface and waited - in the third year we started to get flowers.



Now you can see self-sown seedlings growing where the moss and liverwort created some humus on the rocks.



A single lump of limestone formed the landscape in this trough and once more I scattered Erinus seed - I have repeated this process in the trough below but this time it is a lump of broken concrete block it will take a few more years for the plants to establish on the step sides of the concrete.



Something so simple and easy can bring so much pleasure.



**Alpine landscape**

A few rocks in a small trough can become an alpine landscape where seeds can germinate in the cracks on the cliff aided by the mosses that are growing there.



The view of the whole trough shows the attractive rocks rising through a mass of saxifrage growth that is also due to be clipped back a bit.



Moving on to the garden beds where *Cyclamen hederifolium* flowers shine out among the aging foliage.



**Cyclamen hederifolium** are very happy growing in the shade of trees and shrubs although I do cut back some of the aging herbaceous foliage to allow us to see and enjoy the Cyclamen flowers better.



**Cyclamen hederifolium**



**Cyclamen hederifolium** are also happy growing though low mat forming plants such as the mossy saxifrage and *Oxalis acetosella*.



**Cyclamen hederifolium**, *Oxalis acetosella* and mossy saxifrage all growing in perfect harmony.



**Cyclamen hederifolium**

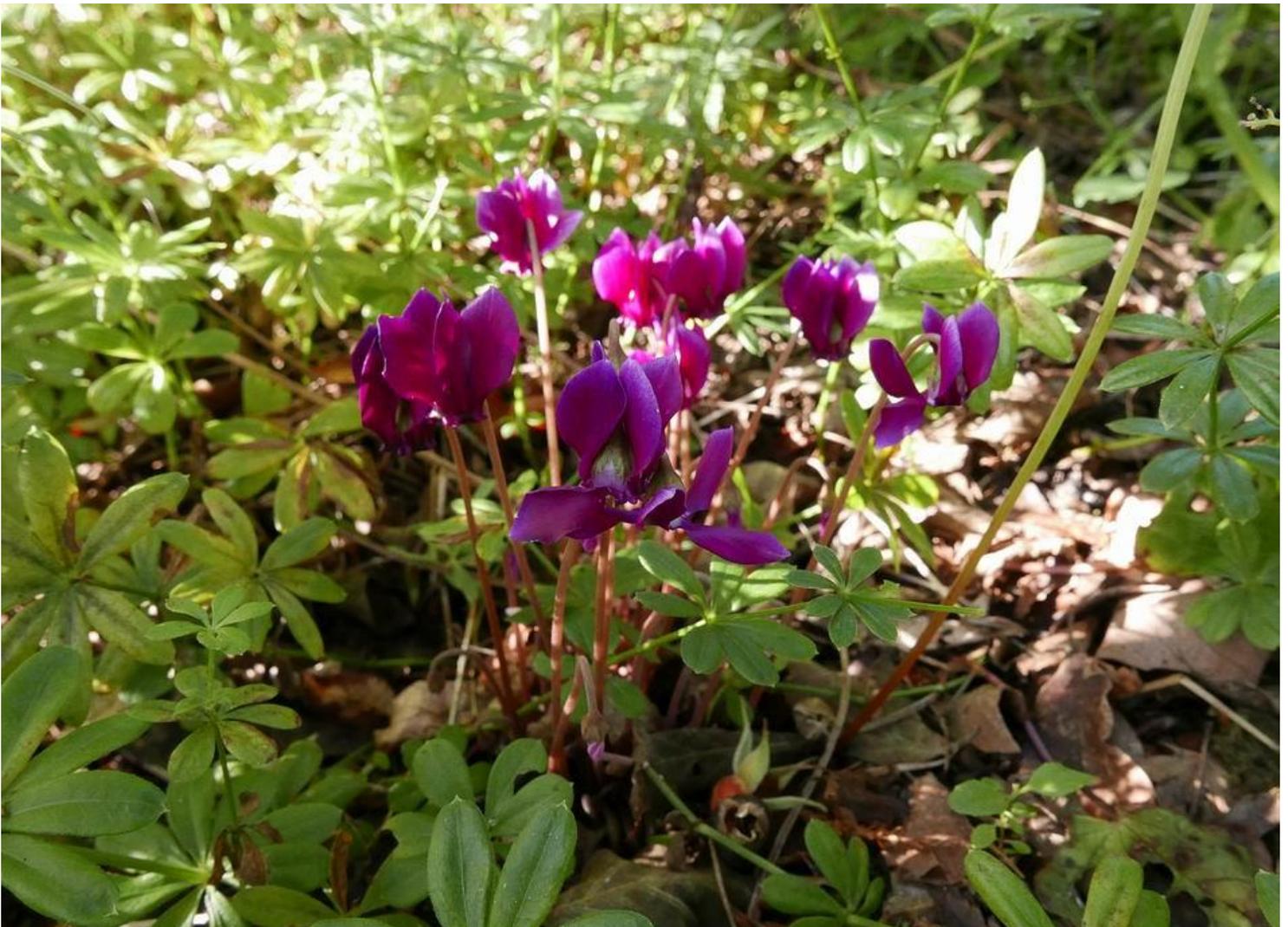


I scattered some seed of *Cyclamen hederifolium* on to the sand bed and the resulting seedlings display a range of colours including some very dark flowered forms.

The first flowers have already been fertilised and their stems are coiling, drawing the seed capsule down towards the ground where they will protect the forming seeds for almost a year before they open to shed their valuable contents.



More dark flowered forms of *Cyclamen hederifolium*.





One of the boxes I emptied out recently contained **Colchicum bulbs** - as I was not ready to plant them at that time I placed them in a basket and covered them with leaf mould. This week I went to plant them and found that growth was initiated which gave me chance to see the structure with the new shoot emerging at the base of the swollen underground storage structure with the roots coming from the base of the new shoot. The shoot is curled because the bulb was lying on its side exactly as in the picture.



The other interesting point is that the orientation of the bulb in the soil does not hinder the new growth. The bulb in the centre was correctly orientated so the shoot is growing through the top and the roots going down from the base – the other two bulbs were lying on their sides and you will see that the roots still know to grow downwards and the shoots upwards. It is always best practice to plant bulbs in the correct way up but the bulbs will always know what way is up and what is down.



**Colchicum flowers** are still emerging; glowing like stained glass in the sunshine.



Their open goblet-shaped flowers attracting hoverflies and bees in for a feed.



**Crocus nudiflorus**

I come back to where I started and will leave this week with **Crocus nudiflorus** flowers – these were cut down by slugs but still we can enjoy them in a small pot.....