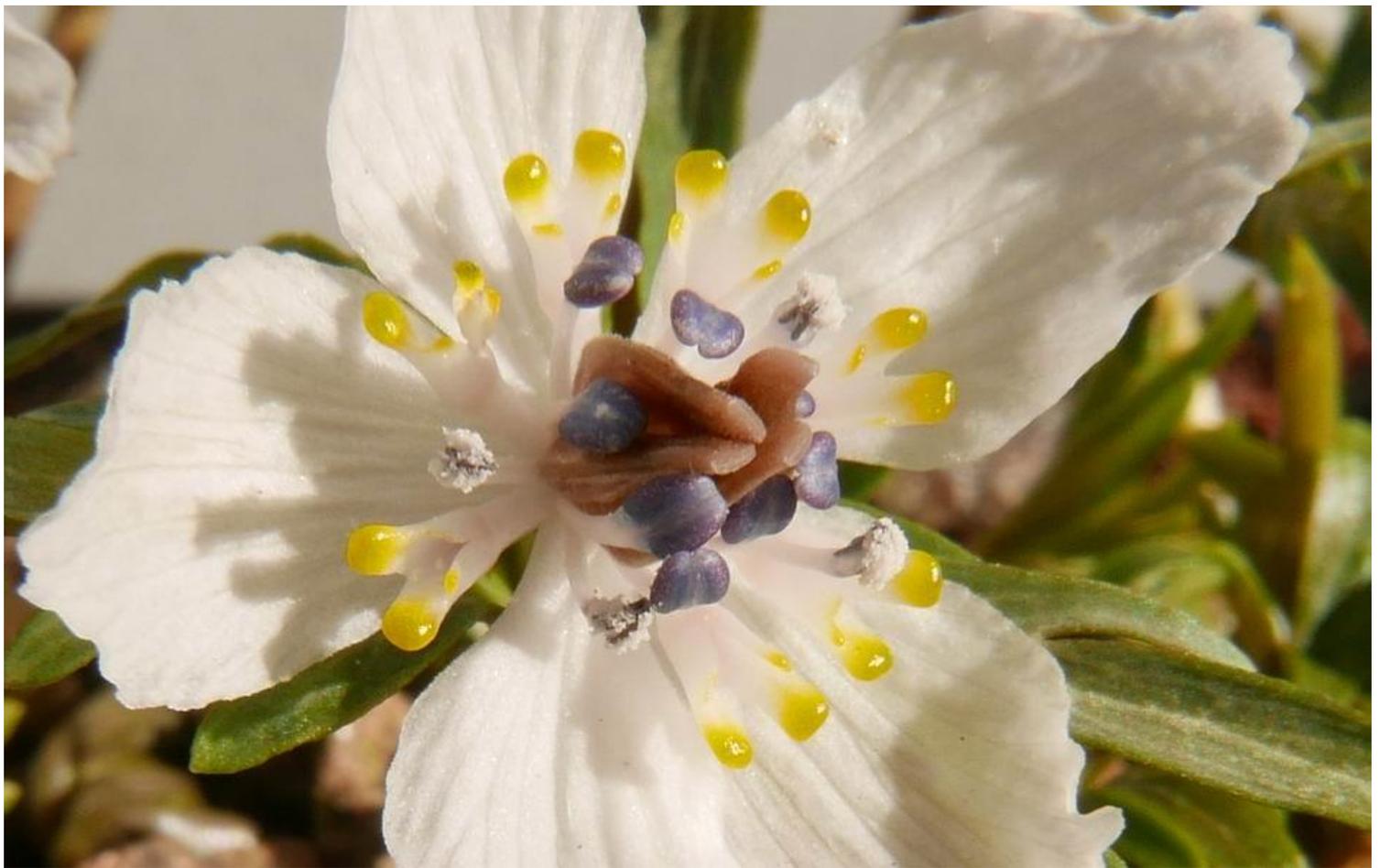




BULB LOG 07.....14th February 2018





Eranthis pinnatifida syn. *Shibateranthis pinnatifida*

Despite being among the smallest of the genus, the stunning colours of *Eranthis pinnatifida* flowers make it my favourite and they remain wide open whatever the weather. The anthers are violet before they dehisce revealing the white pollen – like so many bulbs the anthers take turns to ripen, an adaptation that greatly extends the period when fertilisation can take place. Four of the anthers in the picture above are ripe and I have been carefully cross pollinating between our pots of seed raised plants and I will continue to do so as long as it is in flower in the hope that I will get a good seed set.



I have been in the habit of taking the pots of *Eranthis pinnatifida* into the bulb house when they are in flower in the belief that the protection would ensure a better chance of seed setting however last year I got no seed and the year before I only harvested a small quantity. I am now thinking that the swinging temperature in the small bulb house, which can raise sharply even in our winter sun, may have caused the seed to abort so this

year I am leaving the pots to flower in the open frame, where they spend the rest of the year, hoping that I will get a good seed set to allow me to increase this wee treasure.



Despite shining out against the dark mulch in the sunshine it is too cold to encourage the *Eranthis hyemalis* flowers to open.

Eranthis flowers are not protected in a bud instead they just appear in full colour as they emerge through the ground however they are not full size at that stage they continue growing and it will be some weeks before they open to their full size - perhaps they are waiting until they are large enough before showing me their faces

***Eranthis* ‘Orange Glow’**

It is the case that most colour forms of *Eranthis* come relatively true from seed especially when grown in uniform colonies.





This is a seedling from the pale Eranthis 'Pauline' which is pale just like its seed parent. Eranthis 'Schwefelglanz' is very similar in colour.

I have been scattering mixed seeds to establish plantings with a mixture of all the colour forms we have in the hope that a mixed planting will also produce a seed line with a wider colour range.



Eranthis hyemalis



As organic material in the soil breaks down so the level of beds can sink which had happened in this small bed so I re-established the depth by spreading 7 to 10 cms of garden compost through which these bulbs are now emerging.



Our weather continues to swing between sunny and bright to dark and wet or snowy with temperatures struggling to get above a high of 6C but much to my relief the sun is rising in the sky and the daylight hours are increasing.



Despite the cold it is a real pleasure to be out on a bright sunny day when the light allows for better photographs and some snowdrop flowers start to open.



A yellow form of snowdrop is slowly increasing in the bulb bed, I will leave it to the experts to try and put a name to which one it is - I just enjoy the variation it brings.



Another group of yellow snowdrops pushing their way past the cobble stones that cover and protect the sand bed from mice.



Various Galanthus flowers in the cobble covered sand bed – the green marked flowers are good because of their shape they are always slightly reflexed also they are among the first to respond to a bit of warmth from the winter sunshine.



Leucojum vernum carpathicum

The first Leucojum flowers are now expanding – once open they stay open unlike snowdrops and others which open and close according to the temperature.



Leucojum vernum



Colchicum leaves emerge as the Galanthus flowers react by reflexing slightly to a brief spell in the sunshine also in the centre two *Fritillaria imperialis* shoots put in a seasonal appearance



Two shoots on this *Erythronium caucasicum* is a sign that the bulb is slowly increasing, I find that it takes three to five years for this species to produce second bulb – some forms never increase this way.



Moving into the bulb houses Fritillaria shoots are also starting to appear in the sand beds. It is reassuring to see twin shoots raising from each bulb an indication that they are growing well in this new environment of sand.



Another indication to how the bulbs planted directly into the sand beds are responding to this new (semi)freedom is illustrated by this **Scilla lingulata** leaf rosette growing strongly when compared to the same plants in the pot below.



Scilla lingulata



The hoop-petticoat Narcissus are still the main attraction in the bulb houses as this side of the 'U' shaped sand plunge illustrates. A few weeks ago all the flower interest was in the opposite leg now it is the turn of this side to flower.



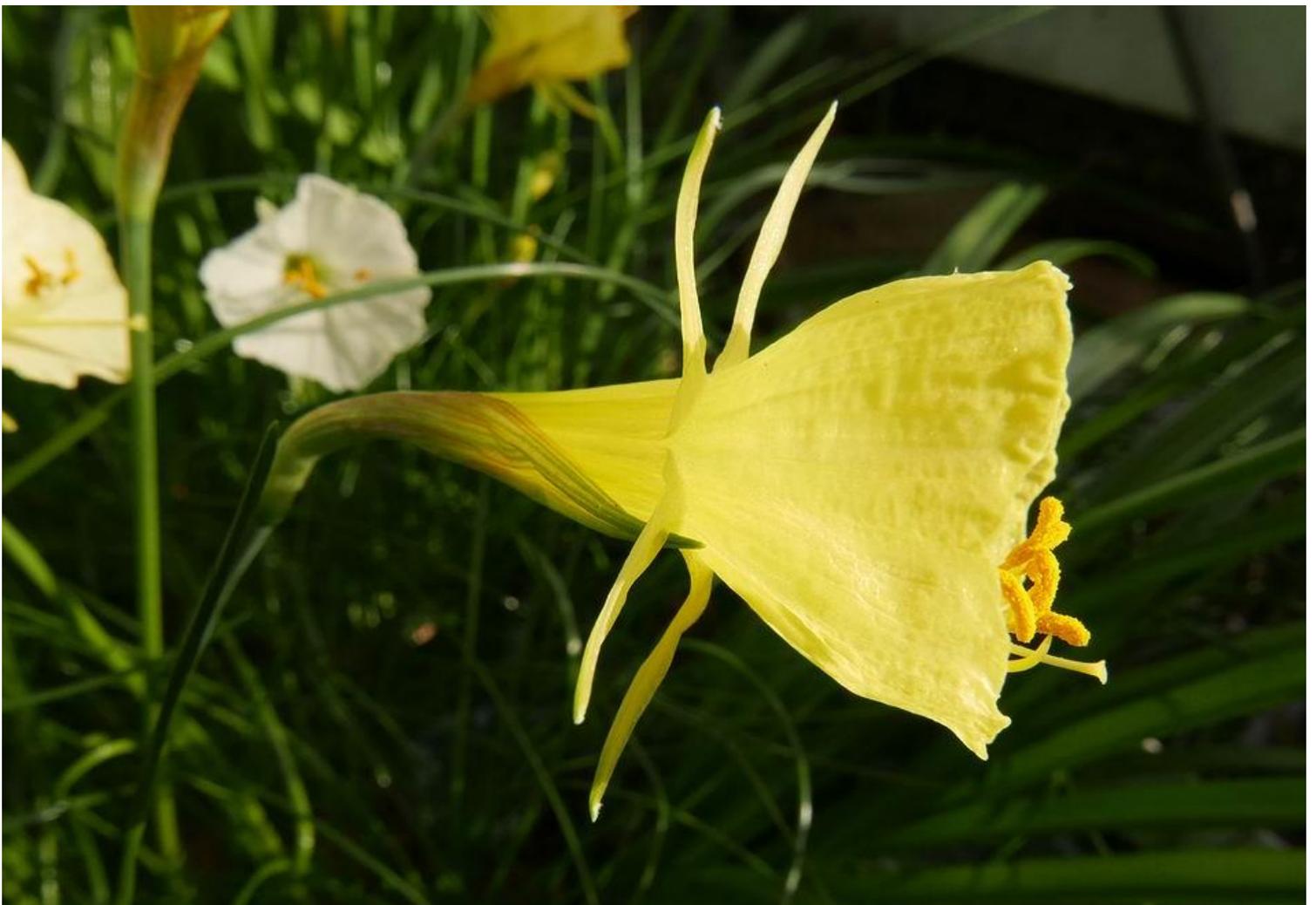
Most of the following are hybrids raised from our own open pollinated seed – all are beautiful.



The yellow one is *Narcissus romieuxii* , the others all hybrids.



Narcissus bulbocodium



Narcissus flowers do not react to the changing conditions once they open they remain open.

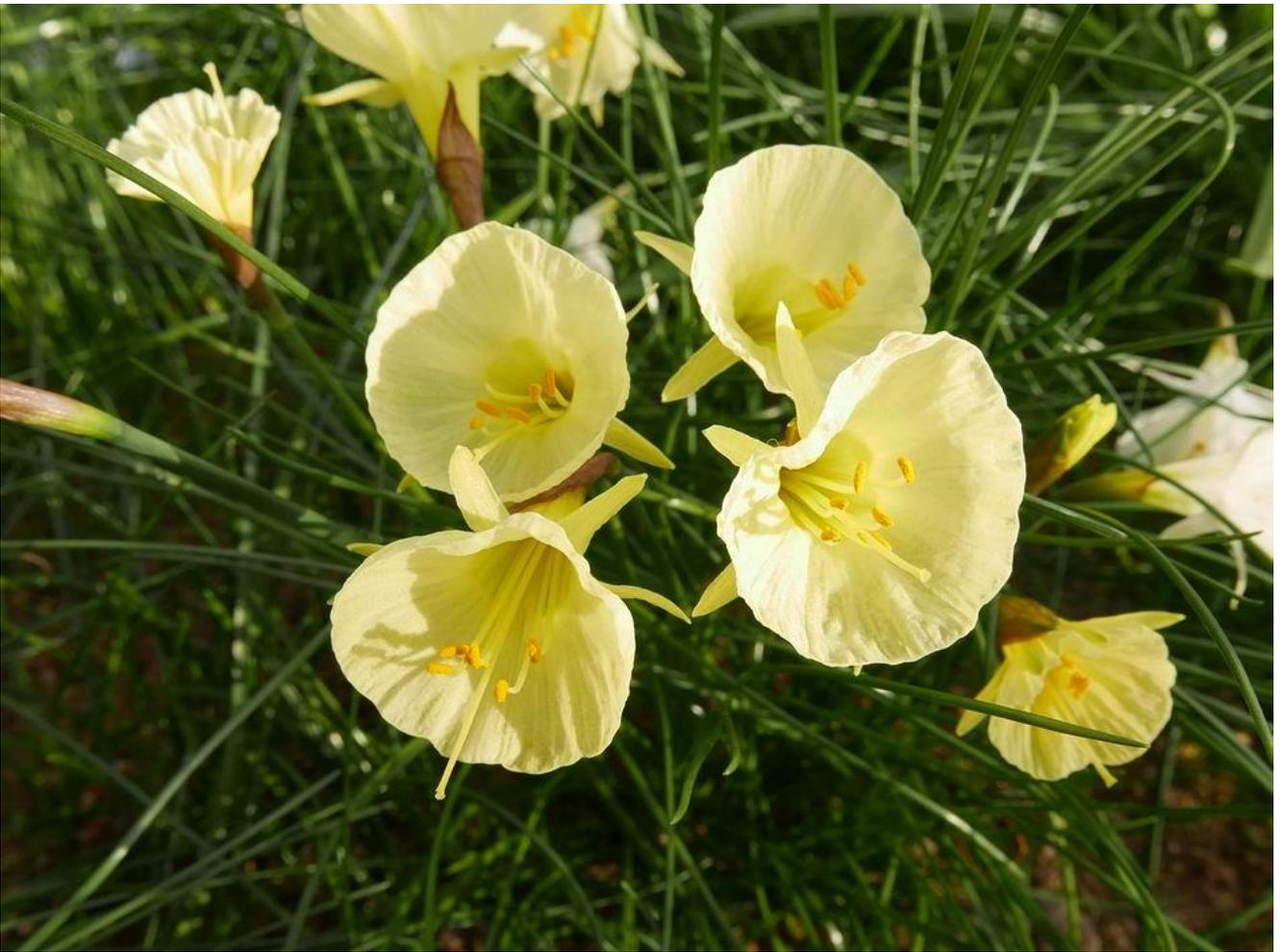


Collecting pollen from **Narcissus bulbocodium**

I mostly use a small paint brush to pollinate the flowers but when the anthers and style are so exerted it is easy to collect some pollen onto my fingers which I can then pass around other flowers as shown below.



Narcissus bulbocodium



As this is the longest established of our sand beds some bulbs like this **Narcissus romieuxii** are forming clumps.



By far my favourite is when the colours grow in mixed groups like here.



Narcissus bulbocodium (yellow) and hybrids.



Petunioid form of *Narcissus romieuxii*



Towards the back behind the tall etiolated growths this short stemmed version is attracting my attention. I will need to do some trials to find out if the short stem is a genetic trait or a cultural one – if it is the former then I will use it in future breeding.



Short stemmed plant is indicated.



Sand bed

The successful growth in the sand beds will, as I expected, also become a problem. As the bulbs increase they become too crowded like they are here so I will need to thin them out. This summer I will dig around in the sand and remove some of the bulbs that are forming clumps. I have marked a few clumps of forms that I particularly like and some the bulbs I lift of those will be grown on in pots for further assessment.



Crocus and Narcissus flowers with Fritillaria shoots just starting to appear.



Colchicum szovitsii



Colchicum szovitsii



Crocus atticus



Sometimes it is never warm enough, even in the bulb houses, for the early flowering Crocus to open their flowers so I need to coax them open. I do this by filling a glass jar with hot water, empty the water then immediately place the warm glass jar over the flower – after a few minutes the flower reacts. It requires a temperature of over 6C before the flowers open.



I will finish this week with this beautiful **Crocus atticus** flower