



BULB LOG 29.....18th July 2018



Allium nevs kianum



One of the reasons that I started the Bulb Log was to share my fascination of bulbs which has not diminished over the years; in fact the more I study them the more pleasure I get. I have said that nature hides the most interesting part of these plants underground and that is the bulbs themselves which we get to see when we are

repotting them. The dried remains of the leaves, flowers and roots of Allium nevs kianum attracted me so much that I took the time to capture them in this week's cover picture. When I tip out a pot of bulbs I am always pleased to find the remains of a good root system because that generally results in strong growth and a healthy crop of bulbs.

Between now and the start of September I will tip out and replant all the pots of bulbs – here there are three pots done and a lot more to do. During the 16 years of the Bulb Log the number of pots of bulbs we grow greatly increased to the point that it was simply not practical to replot them every year and so a few years ago I



rationalised by converting a number of the plunge beds from pot plunges to sand beds where the bulbs are planted directly into the sand – I will review those in coming weeks.



Repotting bulbs requires a lot of potting compost and I have always mixed my own and for the first time this year I have had to buy in some bags of John Innes which is the dark material on the left of the box above, on the right is the potting mix I have made by adding grit and leaf mould to the purchased JI mix. Potting mixes are hot topics among gardeners and is one of the main questions that I get asked but years of growing have led me to the understanding that gardeners worry far more about the makeup of the growing mediums than the plants do. I adapt



the materials that are available to me and at the time when we were growing the maximum number of pots I would get in gravel and sand by the tonne but now I am cutting back to a more manageable level. The key to a good potting mixture is that it must be able to hold moisture and air at the same time. The loam and peat in the JI mix along with the addition of our own leaf mould will hold moisture while the addition of 6mm grit opens up the structure for air. The balance between grit and the other materials is approximately 50/50 by volume but I gauge the final result by squeezing it in my hand: it should feel good. If it stays in a solid clump when I open my hand and shake it then I add more grit if it falls apart then it is good to go. To be sure I check every mix with my

drainage test where I fill a pot with the moist mixture then flood the pot with water.



The water in the flooded pot should drain away quickly – around 20-30 secs is ideal.



These *Narcissus romieuxii zianicus* bulbs came out of this 7cm pot but have been moved up to a 9cm pot.



I find the naming of Ornithogalum confusing we have a number of different types - these were raised from seed ex Greece and grow well in pots and the sand beds.



Despite the hot dry conditions of the bulb houses there is already some new root activity on some of the Ornithogalum bulbs.



Not every pot of bulbs turns out to be a success – every year some bulbs will grow well while others struggle and go backwards like this pot of **Fritillaria stribryinii**. I can learn more from failures like this if I can work out and understand what has gone wrong – in this case the evidence that there is a lack of root remains suggests the problem manifested last September so, was it not enough moisture when the root growth initiated or too much moisture due to lack of drainage that caused the emerging roots to rot?



Either way most bulbs are stubborn survivors and give the grower another chance to get the conditions right - after cleaning away the dried remains I am left with some healthy small bulbils to grow on.

The hot dry weather continues to put the garden under stress although as I am writing (Monday) it is raining as a small front passes over.

These dried out Colchicum leaves have served their purpose in feeding the bulbs below and have died back naturally – in around four weeks they will be replaced by their beautiful flowers.



No matter what time of year there are always highlights and interest to be found on a walk round the garden.



**Arisaema
jacquemontii**

Arisaema
jacquemontii
flowering
alongside the
opening
Erythronium
seed heads.



Lilium martagon



Foliage and structure provided by the trees and shrubs is a critical component in the design of the garden.



The hot dry conditions are causing many of the summer flowering plants, such as the lilies, to go over very quickly – flowers that would last for weeks most years are fading after a few days.





The new bed I made last year, partially edged by troughs is to the right. The pond is to the left which has the marginal bed out of view along the side, where primulas get sufficient moisture even in these times of drought.



Candelabra primula hybrid.



**Primula
florindae**



Roscoea alpina are seeding around below the tall *Arisaema ciliatum* flowers rising through the dried remains of *Erythronium* leaves.



This bed started to flower in the late winter with *Eranthis* and *Galanthus* followed by a succession of many other genera, providing continuous flowering: now the *Roscoea* have their time in this thickly planted bed.



Roscoea scillifolia



There are many species and cultivars of *Roscoeas* available now both as plants and as seed through the exchanges and they bring welcome colourful flowers at this time of year when many of the other plants we grow have past.





Pale yellow **Roscoeas 'Harvington Raw Silk'** with the dark purple **Roscoeas 'Harvington Royale'** behind.



Arisaema candidissimum

Arisaema candidissimum is a showy plant that is shown here flowering through the retreating leaves of a *Colchicum*.



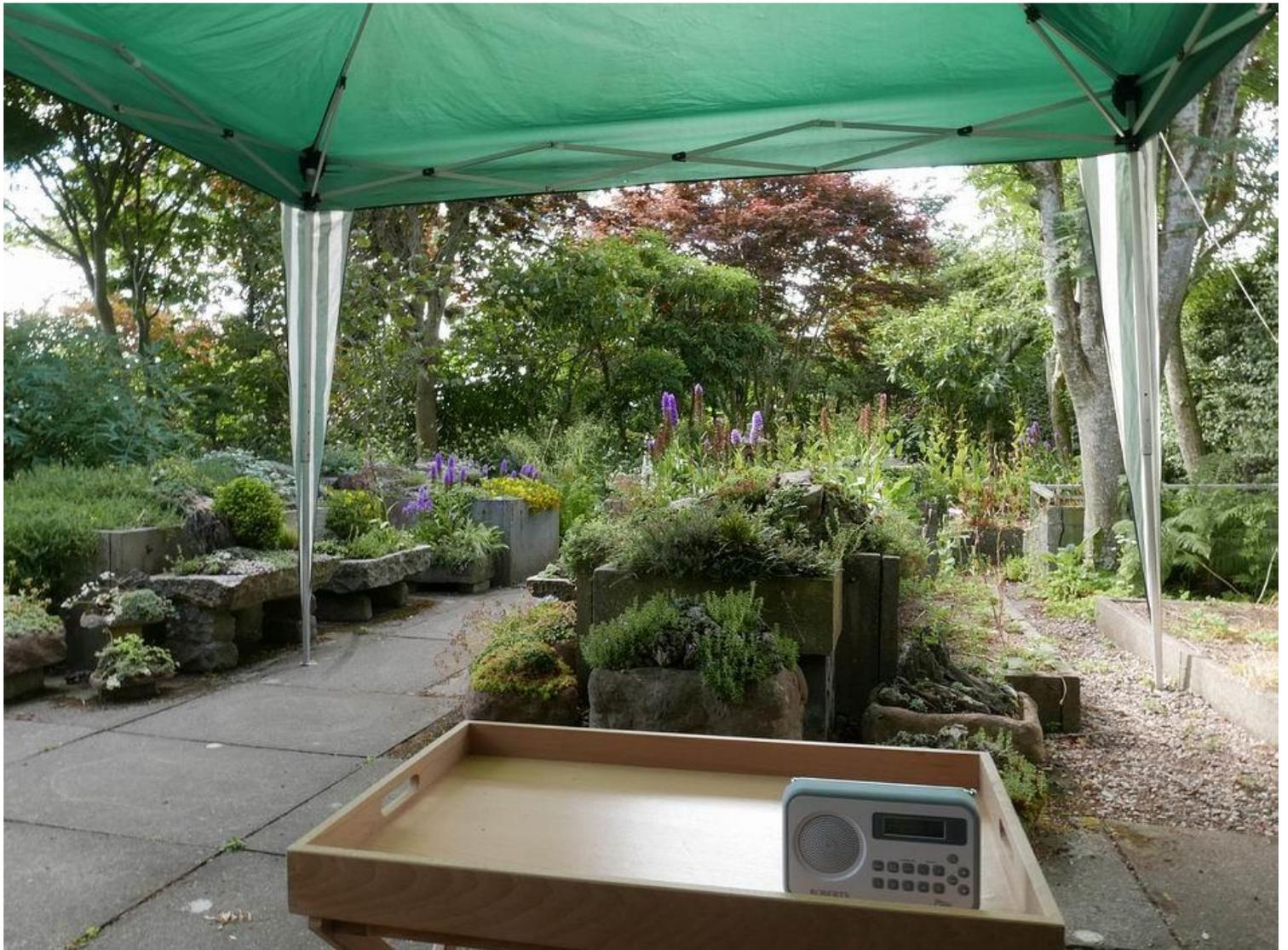


*Arisaema
candidissimum*



While walking around and watering I spot the first *Cyclamen purpurascens* flowers emerging.

There are always surprises appearing in the garden and I was delighted to find this small Linaria which had seeded into a box of Cyclamen seedlings – I hope that it leaves me some seeds to increase it.



I will sign off this week with the view towards the garden from our swing which we have covered with a temporary awning to give us some cool shade: like the plants we grow these gardeners much more used to cool moist summer weather and struggle in such hot dry conditions.....