



SRGC



Bulb Log Diary



ISSN 2514-6114

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BULB LOG 18.....4th May 2022





What defines our gardens is not the plants that we grow but how we use them. Some like their garden all neat and tidy with edges trimmed and the plants spaced out in borders: I am not among those. We follow nature's chaotic way choosing to allow plants the freedom to grow and seed with minimal intervention. Even the 'ordered' Erythronium frame (left), where the plants are growing in square mesh baskets plunged edge to edge checkerboard style, has to look natural and blend in with the wider garden. Regular readers will know that before the Erythronium in the plunge emerge Corydalis, Crocus and

Iris take their turn to grow in the sand and later when the early growth has gone Meconopsis and Papaver will make use of this space before the autumn flowering Crocus close out the sequence.



While plants make gardens it is important to me that our garden is not a "collection of plants" rather I am trying to create a landscape that draws together many visions of wild places that have attracted me - from the seaside to the mountains. In this view the camera angle allows a number of separate beds to combine into a seamless landscape.



It is not all about flowers - foliage is much more important to the look and feel of a garden. The evergreen subjects provide year round greenery backed up by the seasonal leaf growth from the earlier flowering bulbs being joined by the many new leaves emerging. The leaves on the trees are rapidly breaking and will soon form a canopy above our

heads changing the look, feel and atmosphere of the garden.



The seasonal colour provided by the flowers brings highlights through the year but that spectacle only becomes complete when the bright colour of the flowers is set against a backdrop of foliage in many shapes, shades and textures of green.



Fritillaria meleagris, *Erythronium* and *Trillium* flowers put on their colourful display but the star attraction in this image is the *Dicentra* foliage, surrounding the stone mushroom, picked out by the warm light.



Within a few steps the look and feel changes - this view is dominated by the hard landscaping, in the shape of the rock work and slab beds. The stone work is softened by the plants growing among the rocks and the *Erythronium*s flowering in the beds beyond.



Colour is important in a garden. I do not adopt the colour themed plantings seen in some gardens where they have a white border or a blue one - I find that too contrived. I like mixed colours and in nature no two colours clash. I have often heard the saying red and green should never be seen, admittedly mostly applied to fashion, but consider the



Poppy; a much admired perfect harmony of red and green. The combination of the light picking out this bright red tulip and deep red Trillium against the varied green foliage stopped me in my tracks from some distance away. Although we never intentionally combine single colours it is amazing how often nature does it for us with chance groupings of similar coloured plants.



Sanguinaria canadensis, Trillium albidum and white Erythronium hybrids have by chance ended up together in a few areas of the garden.



Sanguinaria canadensis and Trillium



Another accidental planting of white Fritillaria and Erythronium flowers dominate this scene but pinks and yellows are never far away.



A group of **Erythronium 'Craigton Cream'** got into this trough of dwarf willows by accident: tiny offsets must have been hiding in the recycled compost I used.



Moving back towards the mixed colours that I like here provided by ***Erythronium elegans***, ***Erythronium revolutum*** , ***Fritillaria meleagris*** and ***Cardimine*** sp.



Erythronium elegans, and ***Erythronium revolutum***



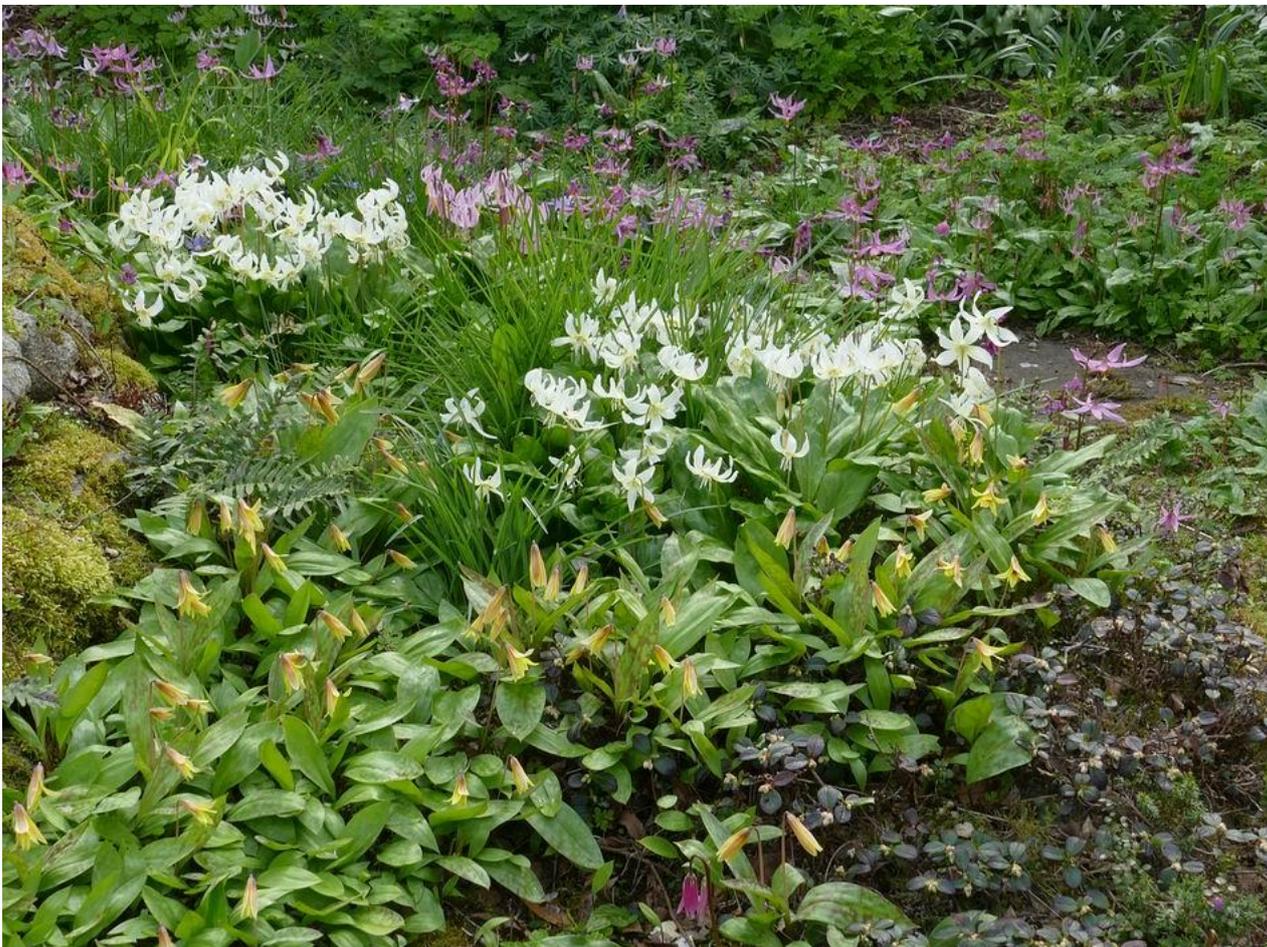
Here the current eye catching attraction are the Erythronium flowers rising through a mass of Galanthus and Eranthis leaves which are evidence and a reminder of the previous waves of flowers we enjoyed a few months ago.



Erythronium oregonum hybrids including Erythronium 'Minnehaha'.



Many species will hybridise when growing together, and allowing self-seeding, as we do, results in lots of **Erythronium hybrids** appearing around the garden, many, such as those above, involving *Erythronium revolutum*.



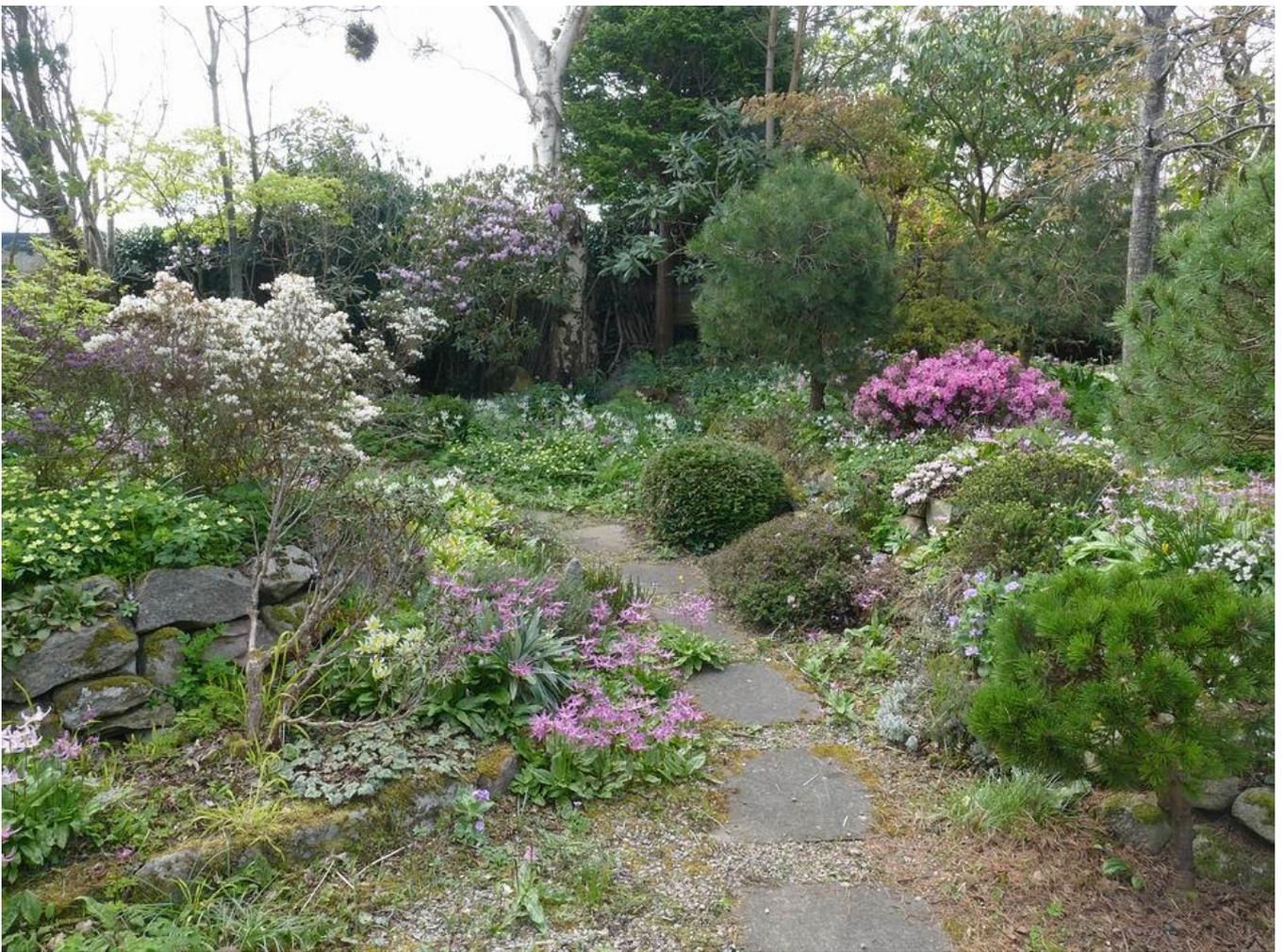
Many of the hybrids in the garden also involve *Erythronium* 'White Beauty', a selection of *Erythronium californicum*.

Here you can see its large white flowers come into bloom as those of *Erythronium americanum* come towards the end of their flowering season.



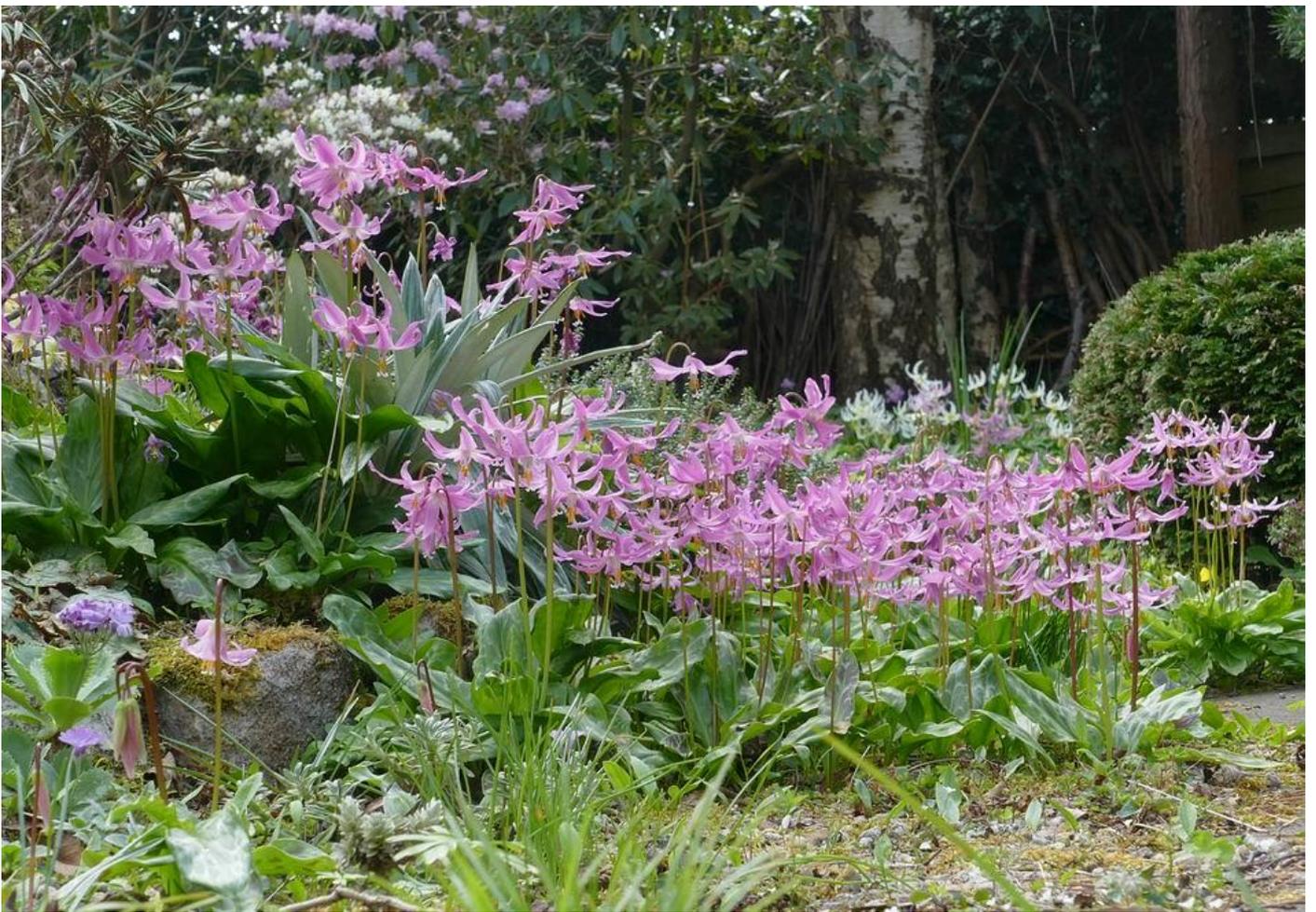
Rather than showing individual plants or flowers I am choosing to show wider pictures to illustrate the value of plant combinations. This value extends beyond the visual, as the mass of leaves covering the ground serves to shade it, retaining moisture in the soil. While we have to work harder to obtain and propagate some plants, once we have established them, they are all treated as equals no matter how common or rare they may be.





We laid out the hard landscaping, planted the trees and shrubs to provide structure, then introduced the first of the plants and since then we have, working in partnership with nature, encouraged them to seed.





Erythronium revolutum is one of the most prolific self-seeding into the gravel paths in ever expanding colonies.



Erythronium seedlings of various ages spreading out in the gravel around the paving slabs.

**Erythronium
revolutum**

Looking down
onto a typical
seeded colony
shows a range
of colours some
are just
variations
within the
species others
will be hybrids.



We have some very distinct forms of **Erythronium revolutum**, the smaller dark flowered one came to us as seed from Vancouver Island and mostly retains its character through the seed line while I find lots of hybrids among the taller ones.



Self-seeding is most prolific in the gravel but we also get seeding in the beds such as this group of mixed hybrids.



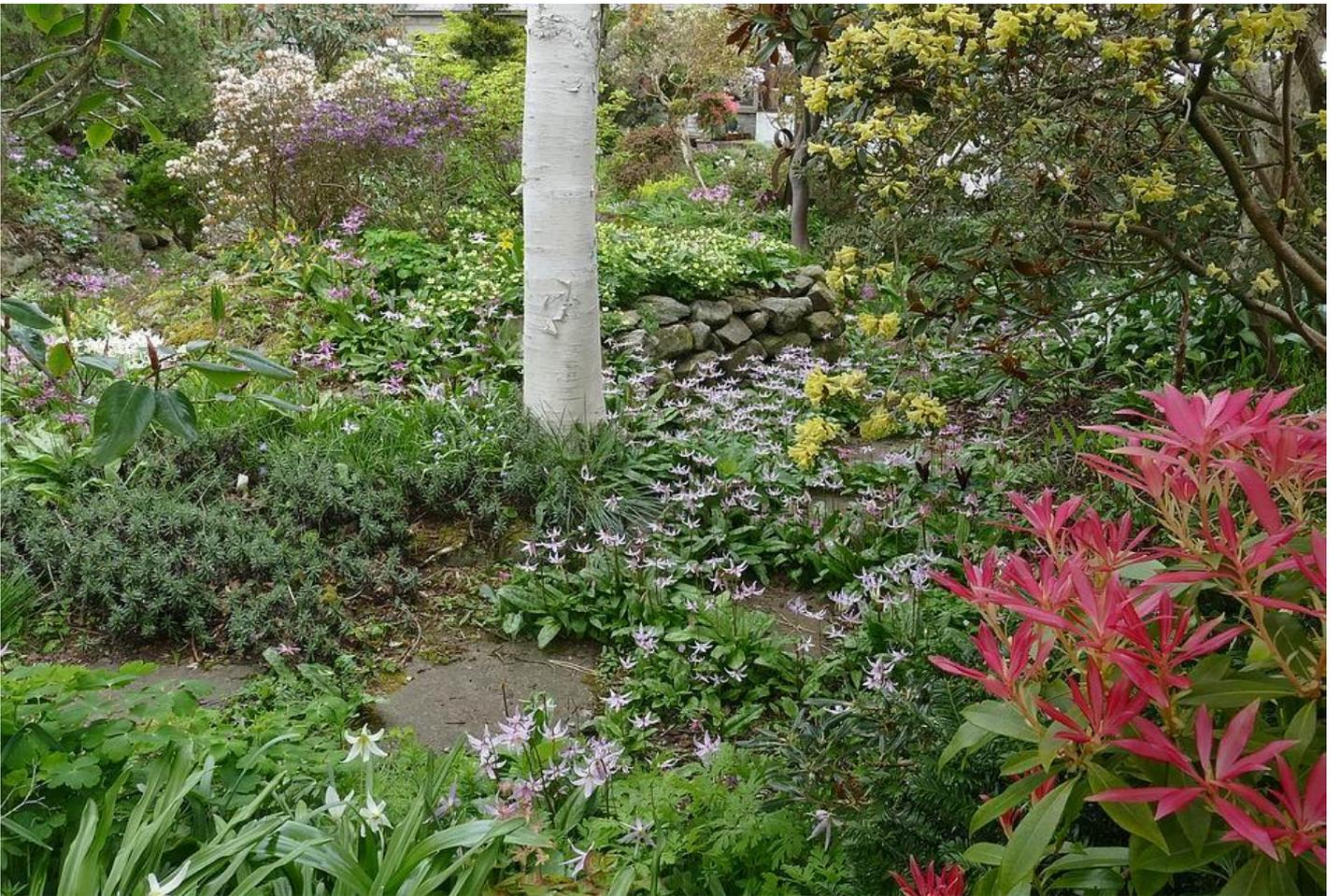
Most **Erythronium hybrids** will bulk up forming clumps - here flowering through the *Dicentra* foliage are a few hybrid clumps.



Here a clonal planting with **Erythronium 'Craigton Cover Girl'**.



Mixed planting.

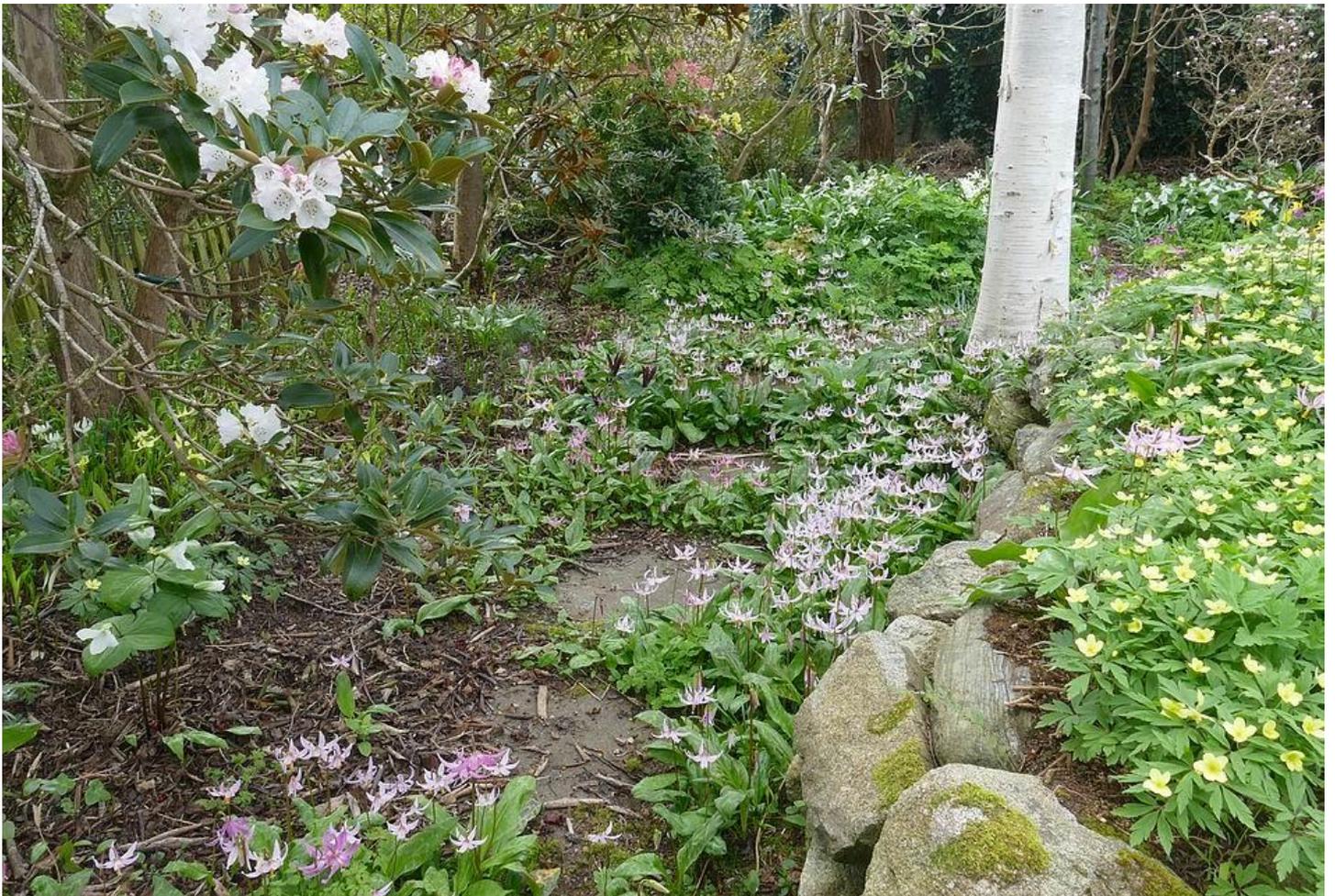


Walking round these paths requires stepping over the Erythroniums in the gravel around and between the slabs.

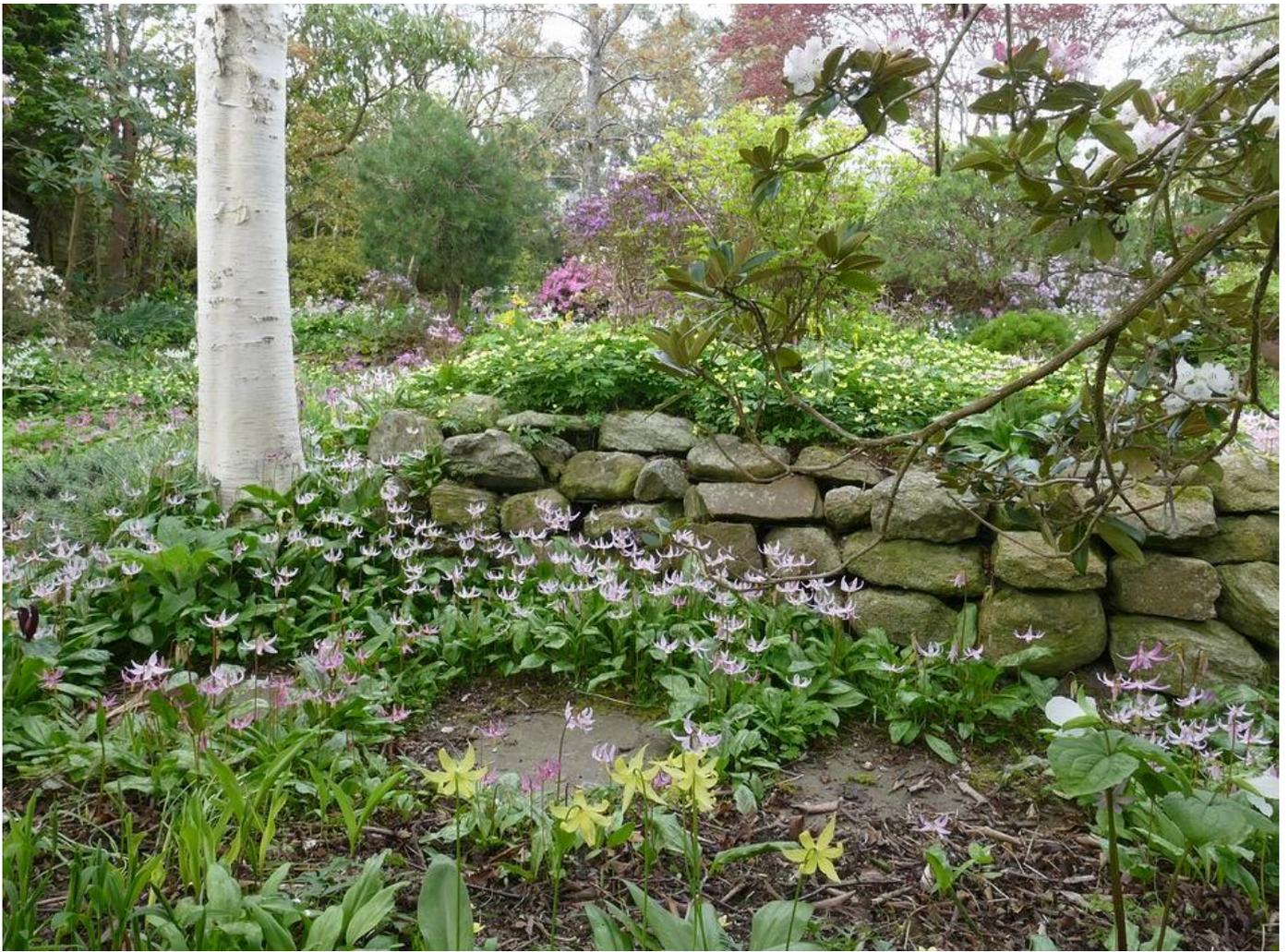




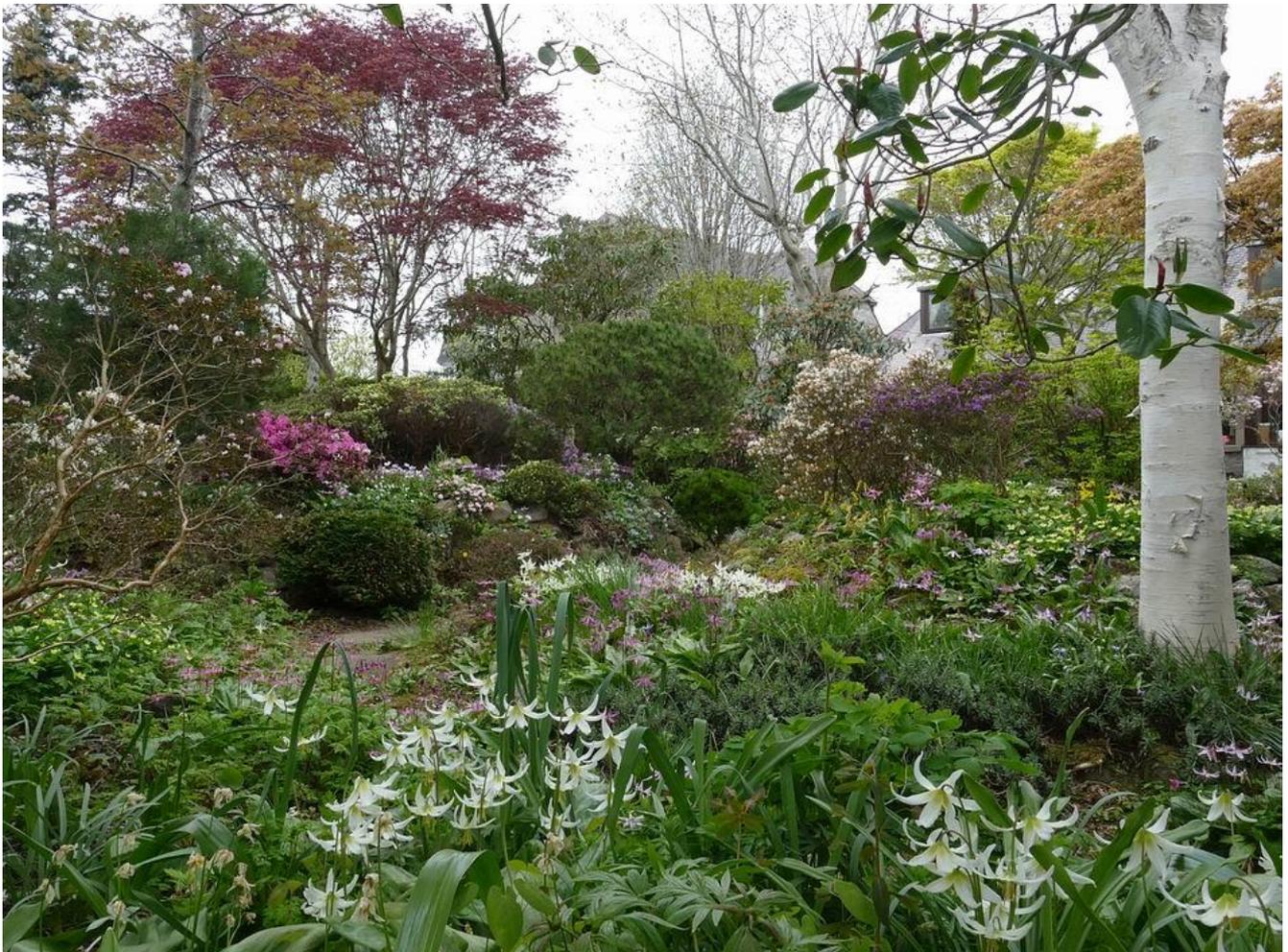
Erythronium and Trillium seeding in the gravel path.

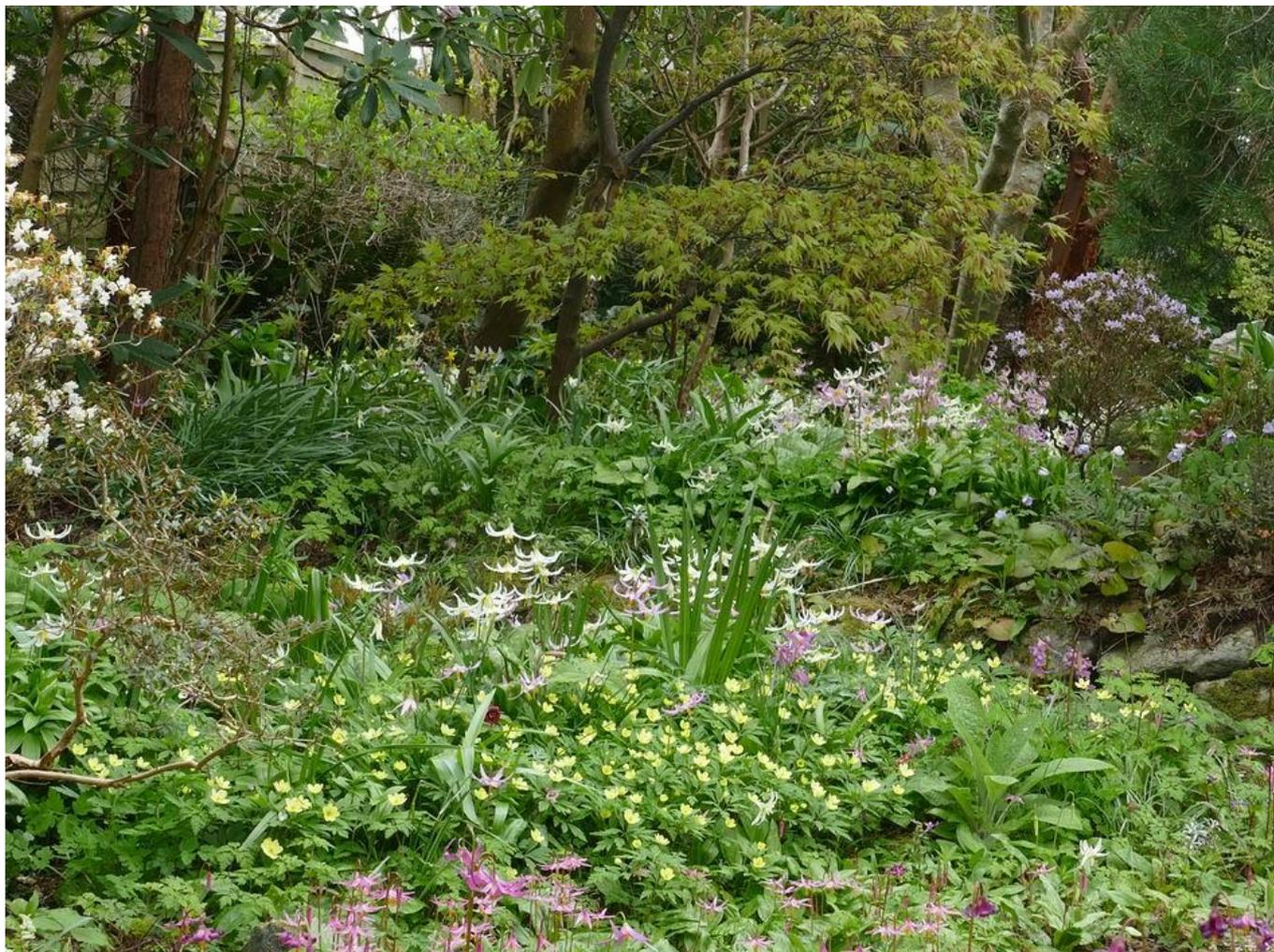


The area to the left is under some very large Rhododendrons and has for some years been too shaded but now the rhododendrons are taller the ground has opened up and I have started to extend the mass planting there.



Another habitat I want to make more use of is this east facing wall - the challenge will be to find the plants that can tolerate if nor thrive in the shaded dry conditions of the gaps between the rocks.

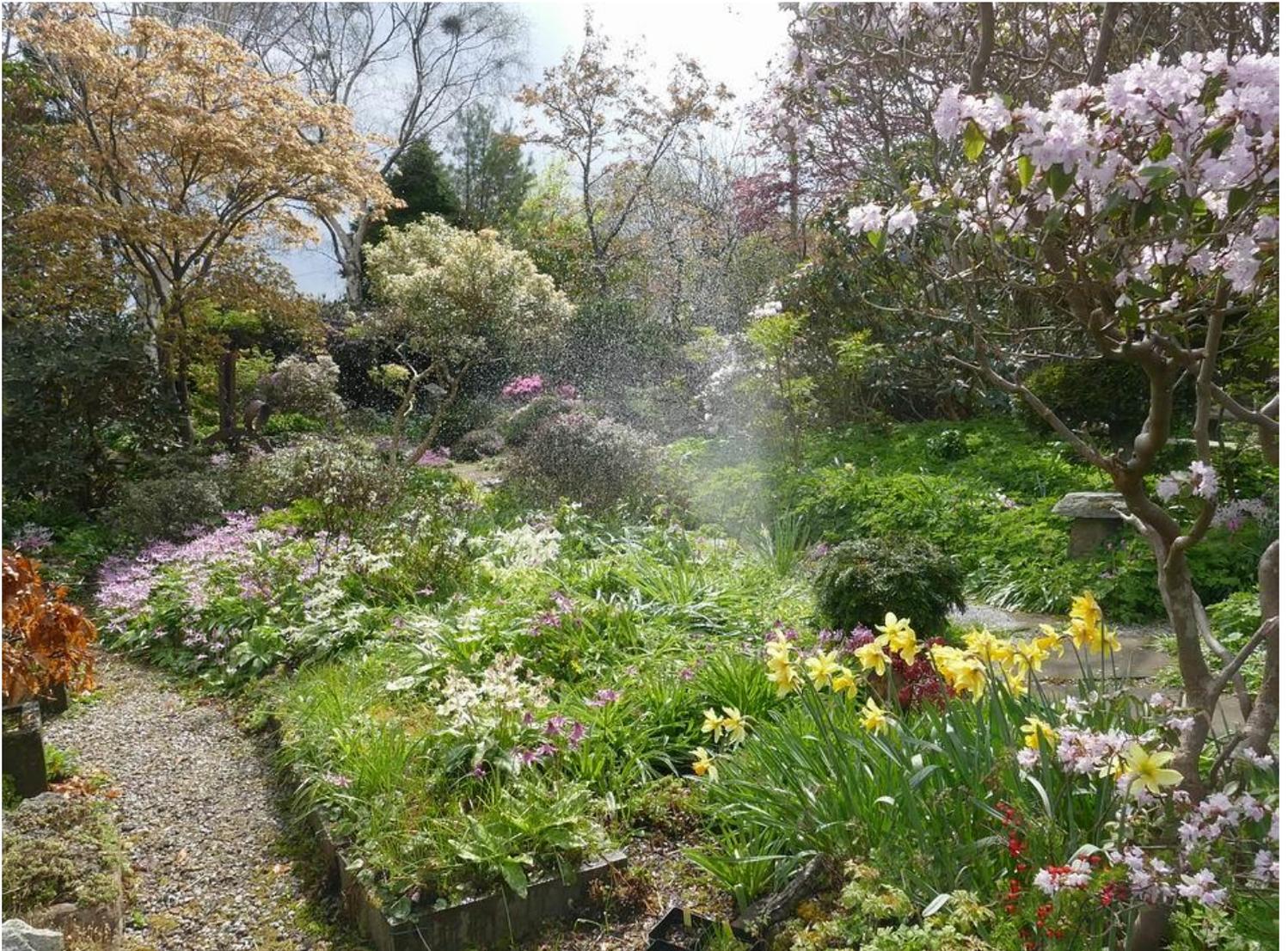




We grow a wide range of plants from those that many would describe as 'weedy' all the way through to those considered 'rare and difficult' none are treated as specimens, all have to take their place in the wider community plantings. I love to explore the garden, learning from nature, enjoying the familiar and seeking out the moments when I discover a plant doing well and seeding itself into sometimes unexpected places.



The Erythronium plunger frames are the nearest we come to growing specimen plants but I hope you agree that they are a beautiful sight just now when they are in full flower, but for me Erythroniums are even more attractive when growing among the wide mixture of companion plants around the garden.



For the third year in a row we are having a dry spring so I will sign off this week with a view of the sprinkler watering one of the beds and I will continue my discourse on the importance of the garden next week.....