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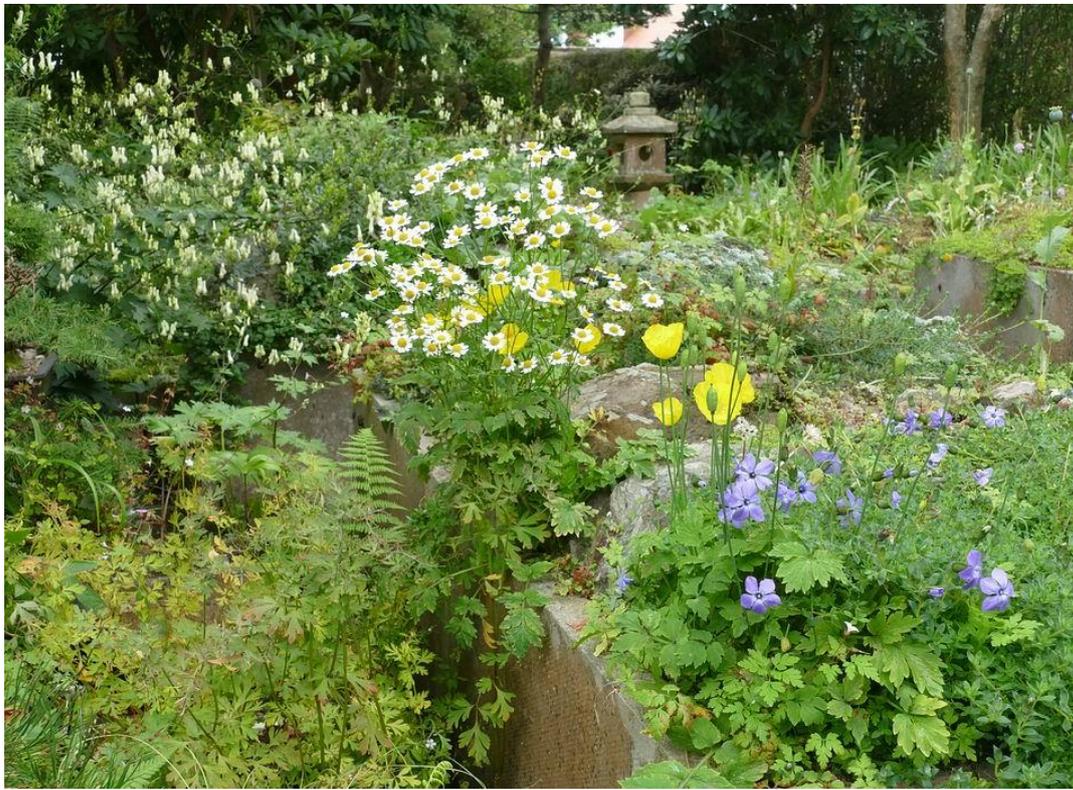
# Bulb Log Diary

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Okay, I confess to being a ‘weedy gardener’. In a way I am just returning to the roots of my interest in plants. As a boy I became interested in the wild plants that I saw growing initially around our area of Scotland so it is no surprise that the circle now closes. My interest spread out to include plants from across the world with a particular emphasis on how they grow in their native habitats and now I find myself increasingly attracted back to those plants often considered to be weeds which in our garden are allowed to grow alongside international visitors such as the **Cyananthus lobatus hybrid** as seen on the cover.

So what are weeds?

Many gardeners include the beautiful white daisy flowered **Tanacetum parthenium, Feverfew**, as a weed but just consider some of the advantages of growing it in your garden where a succession of flowers over many weeks adds food for the eye as well as for the many garden visiting pollinators. Along with many of the other so called weeds Feverfew been appreciated for centuries by herbalists for the medicinal properties this herb delivers.



**Cyananthus lobatus hybrid**



A recently planted small international community consisting of **Oreomyrrhis argentea**, **Achillea millefolium**, **Potentilla reptans** and **Geranium robertianum** are growing at the other end of this slab bed. This planting replaces the Himalayan Geum reptans which for forty years has grown well for us spreading out and seeding around, until in the last few years our weather became warmer and drier - conditions that this plant could no

longer tolerate and sadly it died out in this bed. Fortunately some of the self-sown seedlings are still growing and perhaps through generations of garden seed Geum reptans will be able to adjust its tolerance to the changing weather.

I learned about growing plants in groups like this from observing nature where I have often seen communities of plants with plenty of space huddled together not in competition but supporting each other. Here I was interested with the similarity between the foliage of the Australian Oreomyrrhis, and our own native Achillea.

We have been fortunate through most of our gardening life to have had easy access to seed and so have been able to introduce plants collected mostly from the mountains and harsh environments of the world but now there are many regulations that restrict or forbid such exchanges of seed and plants across borders. We are not the first generation to introduce plants to the British Isles, it has been going on since the very first hunter gathers ventured across the Doggerland bridge connecting us to mainland Europe when sea levels were much lower, during the end of the last Ice Age. Many of the wild plants or weeds we see growing in Scotland have been introduced by humans at some time in our history.



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We grow a range of small 'rock garden' type plants in the four raised slab beds and surrounding troughs: some we planted others have volunteered as their seeds have found their way in to this small rocky landscape.





***Scabiosa columbaria* 'Nana'**



Moving beyond the trough area the garden becomes more like a wild uncared for area at this time of year but looking among this peak season of foliage there are many international visitors flowering.



**Roscoea alpina**



Roscoea alpina grows in a number of areas including here where it is seeding around among Arisaema and Primula. The many early growing plants it shares the bed with have finished their annual growth and now rest out the summer months underground until they reappear next spring.



We think we select the plants we grow and in the short term that is true but in the longer term it is the plants that select us. If they are suited to your growing conditions and can tolerate your weather they will seed around and settle in like *Roscoea alpina*.





It seems to me that it is often the plants that can tolerate the widest wide range of conditions and that seed around prolifically, such as **Campanula persicifolia**, are those that are rejected as weedy. I see many of these plants to be a valuable part of our garden with some control such as dead heading to reduce the amount of seeding.



**Leucanthemum vulgare**



***Aconitium vulparia***



***Lilium martagon***



Some may be horrified by some of the 'weeds' that we let grow but at this time of year they fit in perfectly into the garden providing valuable food resources for pollinators and other wild life as well as creating the wild garden.



You may spot plants such as *Arisaema candidissimum* peeking out among the foliage in the previous picture.



**Eucomis bicolor** is always late to arrive at the party and along with some of the larger Roscoea, its new season shoots do not emerge until well into July.



**Eucomis bicolor**



I would like to have more **Papaver rhoeas** (above) and **Papaver somniferum** (below) but I suspect that when left to their own devices much of the seed gets eaten so this year I will collect some and sow it in situ in the spring.





Among the seed eaters are the large population of House Sparrows that make free with the facilities including using the bulb house sand beds when they are dry through the summer for dust baths - sometimes as many as 50 at a time. I have also been busy repotting the bulbs. If you want to read more about that check back through the previous years of the [Bulb Log](#) where you will find I have written extensively about the methods we use to grow bulbs.



Late July is when I cut the hedges – the shaggy growth can be seen in the previous picture but now all that growth is shredded and composting in piles around the garden where it will be spread later as a mulch.



**Prunella vulgaris** is another plant that introduced itself to the garden. I was delighted when I first spotted the seedling growing through the cracks between the paving slabs and since then we have enjoyed watching it seed out, forming a nice colony attracting many pollinators over a very long flowering season. Depending on the growing position this plant can form a flat mat on top of which are many short racemes of flowers.



But its scape can equally well extend to push the flowers up into the light as here where it grows in the shade of a trough. It is an equally good trough plant.

The fact that many of these plants have tens to hundreds of small flowers that open in a progression from the bottom to the top makes them highly efficient and successful plants. That fact is illustrated by the fact that I showed many of them flowering last month and they are still going strong. This long time window is not just beneficial to the pollinators but it means that there is a greater chance of a successful seed set unlike a showy large flower that may only last a day.



***Linaria purpurea*** and ***Origanum majorana*** have some of the smallest blooms in the garden but produce a succession of flowers, some of which opened in June and are visited daily by a constant procession of various bees.



Combined these plants deliver a natural influence to the garden making it more like a landscape than a garden.



While foraging some wild raspberries I got thinking about selection. Firstly, the way we think it is we who select the plants but rather it is them that select us. Then there is selection within a species to choose what we think is the most desirable. These thoughts came because within this area of wild Raspberries where there are plants that produce the nice plump berries I am harvesting while there are areas where the fruits are always poorly formed with few individual drupelets that are not worth harvesting.



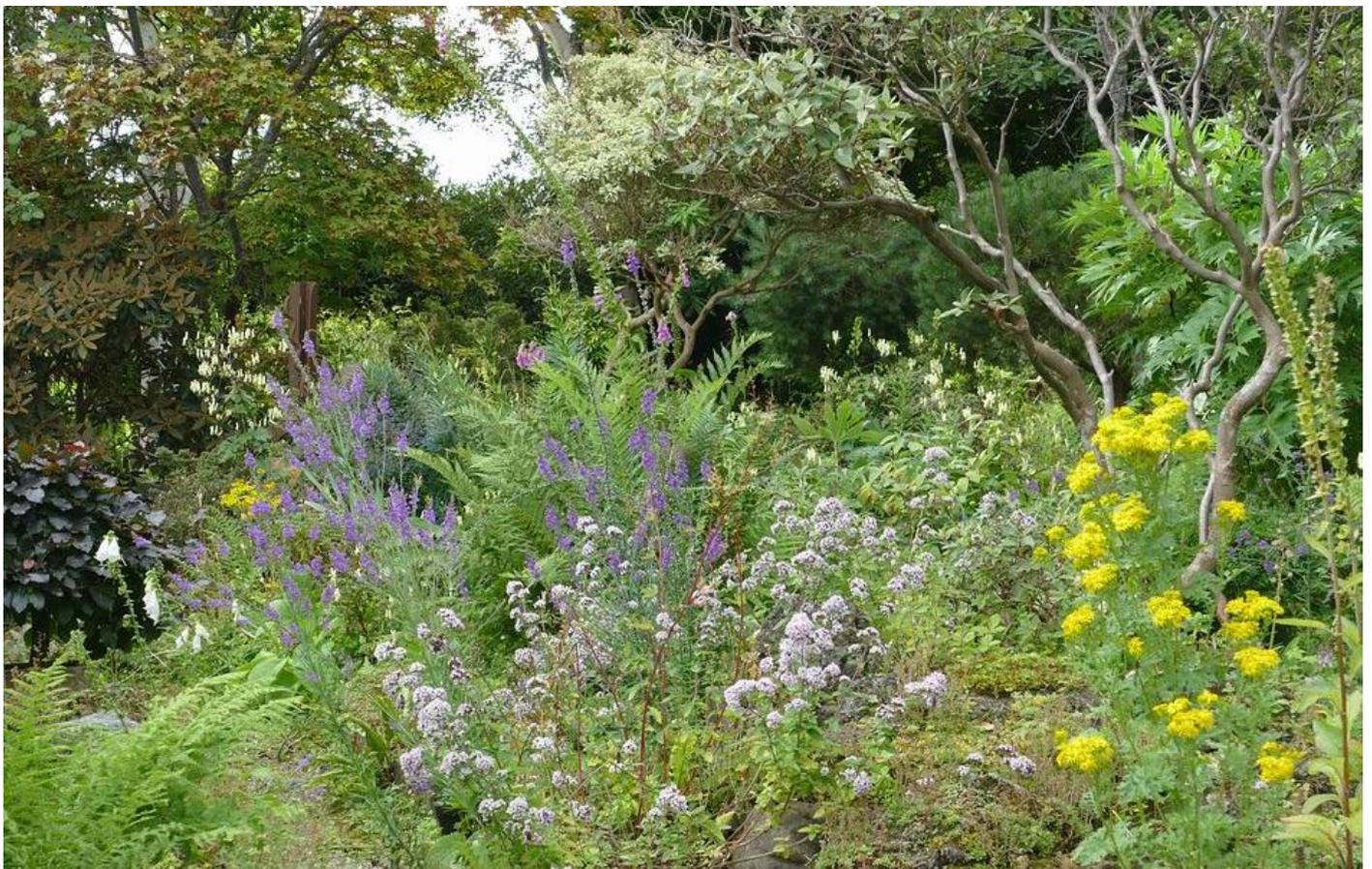
There is nearly always going to be variation with in a plant species such as the difference in size between these two clones of **Senecio jacobaea**.



Oops, another weed slips in. Two plants of **Senecio jacobaea** have appeared in the back garden this year and there is an obvious difference in their flower size as shown in the previous picture, and hence overall shape – compare them above and below.



**Senecio jacobaea**



I should add a note about the responsibility we have as gardeners in regard to notifiable and/or invasive weeds which we should not be allowing to spread especially ones that spread vigorously from the root or by stolon . To this end while I like the visual and beneficial effect of the Ragwort I will not let it seed beyond saving a few so we can enjoy a similar spectacle next year.



There are plenty **Senecio jacobaea** growing around our area in field's verges and at the seaside as shown here where its acid yellow flowers contrasts well with the Sottish Bluebell, **Campanula rotundiflora** a plant that despite growing so well here just two miles away and in sight of the garden I have never managed to establish.



Wild areas are like the garden with a mixture of native and introduced plants such as garden escapee, *Spirea douglasii*, adding to the restricted native flora to create a lovely spectacle at the entrance to Aberdeen Harbours and mouth of the River Dee.



Wild garden

I will leave you this month with one more picture showing the decorative value of growing some of these plants and a link to my latest [Bulb Log Video Diary](#).