



SRGC

# Bulb Log Diary

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The garden changes completely as the summer growth emerges. In places the tree canopy is quite dense and the annual display of dangling scented yellow racemes of Laburnum flowers once again looks magnificent. It is also all change at ground level. Most of the early bulbs have completed their growth cycle, seedpods on the erythronium stems being the only evidence that they exist. Now the ground where they grow is completely covered with a mass of lush summer growth.

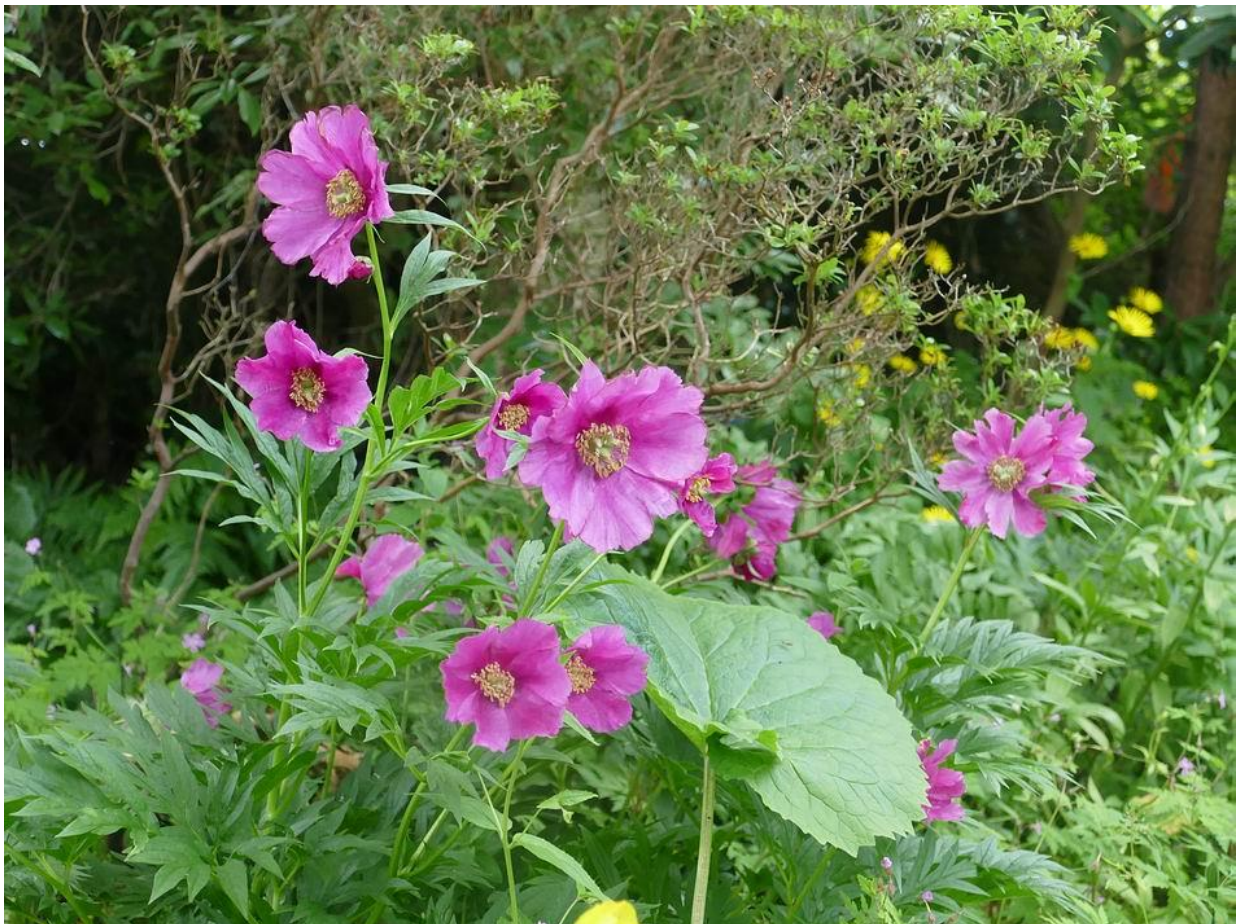


Always a favourite subject to capture photographically is this pale coloured **Iris sibirica** captured against the Laburnum tree in full glorious flower.





Many of plants, including ***Paeonia veitchii* var. *woodwardii***, are seeding around: some are common and prolific, like *Geranium robertianum*, others are the result of seed I have scattered such as the large leaf in this picture which I have to wait until I see a flower to identify.



It is lovely to observe the subtle variations in the ***Paeonia veitchii* var. *woodwardii*** seedlings which mostly appear in the gravel areas.





Another favourite at this time of year are the yellow daisy flowers of **Doronicum orientale**. As a tall growing plant it is prone to collapsing. Here growing under the shade of a large birch tree this specimen was battered flat by recent strong winds and rain. Staking plants looks too unnatural for me so I leave the flattened stems to respond naturally by turning up at the ends pushing the flowers back into the light giving the impression that they are flowering on shorter stems.

While *Doronicum orientale* sets plenty of seed I have not seen any natural seeding around the plants. The reason is probably because early in the year when the seed would be germinating our garden beds are already covered in dense growth. Where I want more I germinate seeds in pots planting them out in late summer or spring.







And so at this time of year the self-seeders become the main feature of the garden. Many of these volunteer plants were originally introduced by us but we also get some seeds that find their way here naturally.



I become increasingly relaxed about letting the garden go wild. It is like we have multiple gardens starting in February when the early bulbs put on their wonderful display, through the various sequences, all recorded in the Bulb Log, until now when it reaches its wildest manifestation when the growth is so abundant that it is difficult to walk around.





It is easy to spot what evidence remains of the early bulbs above ground with the last remnants of leaves yellowing as they are allowed to seed and die down naturally. The ground they share is now utilised by the new growths of the self-seeders including *Digitalis*, *Aquilegia* and *Meconopsis*. As I write it is raining and cold for the very time of year when we should be enjoying some summer warmth. As a gardener I am pleased because these conditions will better suit the *Meconopsis* which have suffered a bit in the changing climate which has resulted in warmer drier weather at the very time the plants need cool moist conditions. The *Aquilegia* and *Digitalis* reliably cope with anything our weather brings with the exception of the strong winds which can knock them flat.



We used to know the yellow poppy as ***Meconopsis cambrica*** but now it has to be called ***Papaver cambricum***. Whatever name it goes by it remains a reliable and much-loved plant in the garden where its yellow flowers are dotted across most areas.





A blue *Corydalis* grows happily among the many self-seeding *Aquilegia*, *Geranium* and *Poppies*. Plants do not care whether their neighbours are new, rare or difficult to cultivate as long as they can all grow in harmony.



Many may shun ***Erinus alpinus*** calling it a 'weedy' plant. I say the fact that it seeds around and will grow in most conditions makes it is one of the great plants that should be in every garden. It brings interest to the troughs after the early flowering saxifrages are past.





The troughs have been the habitats where we have grown many of the more challenging rock garden plants. In the long term many plants have come and gone now those that have sustained are now sharing their small habitat with the **Erinus alpinus** however this trough with a lump of hard tufa is dedicated to the Erinus which is left to self-seed about in the mossy crags of its small rocky habitat.



Alpine strawberries have seeded around below the troughs and around the slabs where their flowers bring decoration as well as food for the pollinators then tasty treats for the other wild life, including the gardeners.





Typical view showing the balance the garden has between trees and ground level plants.

This view should be familiar to regular readers. I feature it regularly throughout the year as it goes through so many phases of growth. Starting from the first snowdrops it goes through a number of sequences until the jungle appears at this time of year. You might wonder what is there to see - but seek and you will find.







You will find *Arisaema ciliatum* var. *liubaense* and *Roscoea purpurea* growing and seeding among others.



Over the years ***Arisaema ciliatum* var. *liubaense*** has spread across the garden by seed. The distribution is helped by me when I grab handfuls of bright red cluster of berries that drop to the ground in autumn to scatter across other beds.





I am drawn to the colours, shapes and forms of foliage and here among the many different types I was interested in the similar form that the Arisaema leaves share with Lilium martagon.





**Lilium martagon**



The summer lilies such as **Lilium pyrenaicum** grab your attention. It does this both visually and by their powerful scent that seems to separate people into two camps - those who find it pleasant while others are repelled.





**Digitails purpurea** flowers rise up like spires from the ground where they seeded so while the plants we enjoy may remain the same each year they will appear in different places. Like many of the prolific seeders we bring an element of control by cutting the stems back after flowering allowing only a few seed pods per plant. Cutting back the stems also encourages extra flowers to come further down the stem.

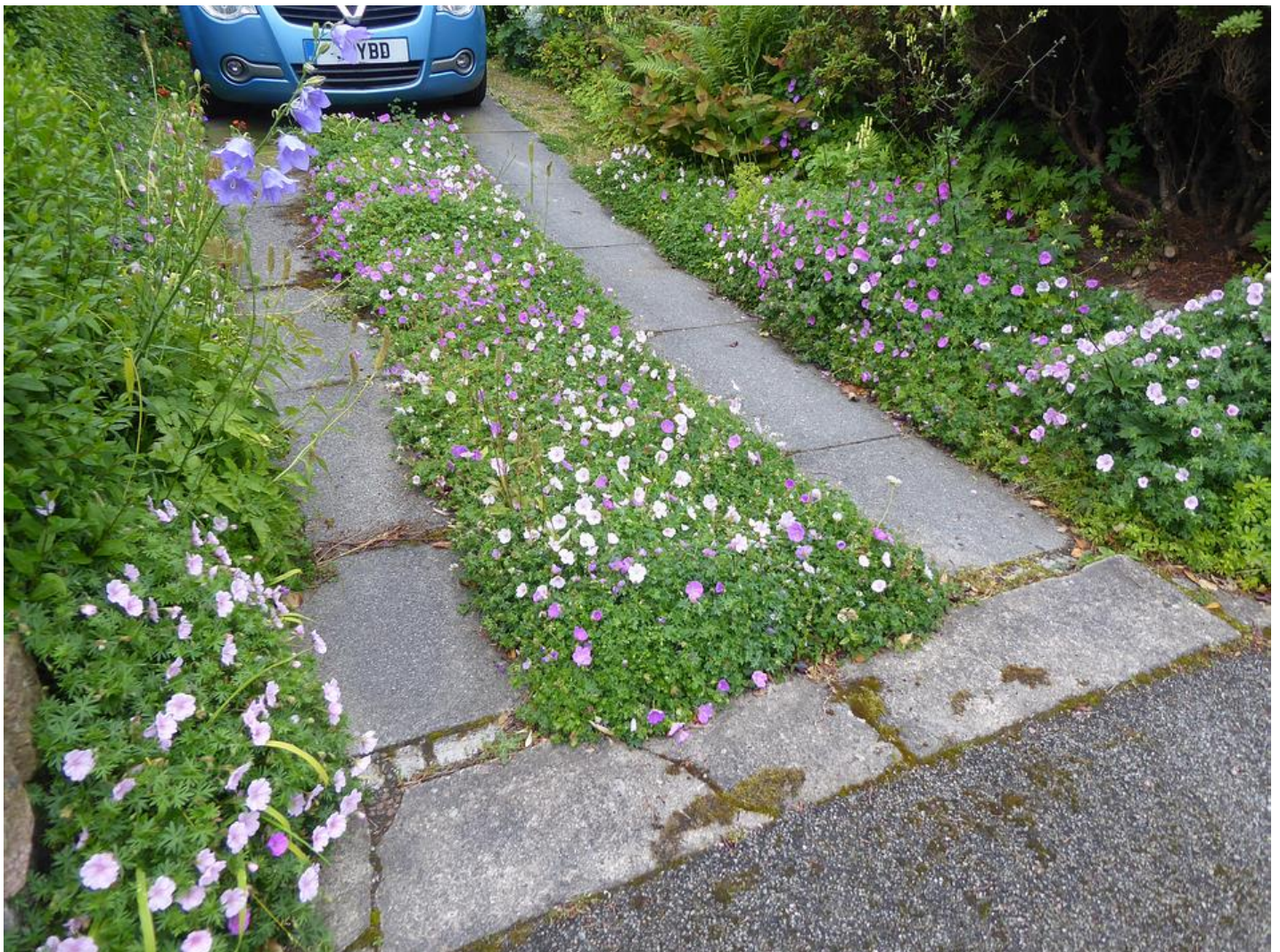
We have sown thousands of pots of seeds through the years but now prefer to leave the plants to seed themselves. You will always see some pots of seeds around. The two pots of seed here they are of *Anthriscus sylvestris* and *Ligusticum scoticum* both collected locally to add to the wilding and biodiversity of the garden.







You may have noticed this very fine plant **Plantago lanceolata** in the previous picture. It is growing smack in the middle of a path - there is no plant snobbery going on here. I have often written that a weed is something that is in our minds not our gardens. We disregard many wild flowers that can add value and diversity to our gardens.



I have been asked how the front drives are looking; they are just fine and like the rest of the garden the gravel areas are bursting with plants.





The latest [Bulb Log Video Diary](#) starts looking at the front garden and drives before moving to the back- click the link if you've not seen it.

If you would like to read more about the drives I did a [Bulb Log driveway special](#) back in 2017 which shows their progression through year.

It is very difficult to keep areas of gravel free from plants in the long term. Despite our early efforts to keep the 'weeds' away we have accepted that they add to the beauty and biodiversity of the garden so with an element of control we will allow many of them to grow.





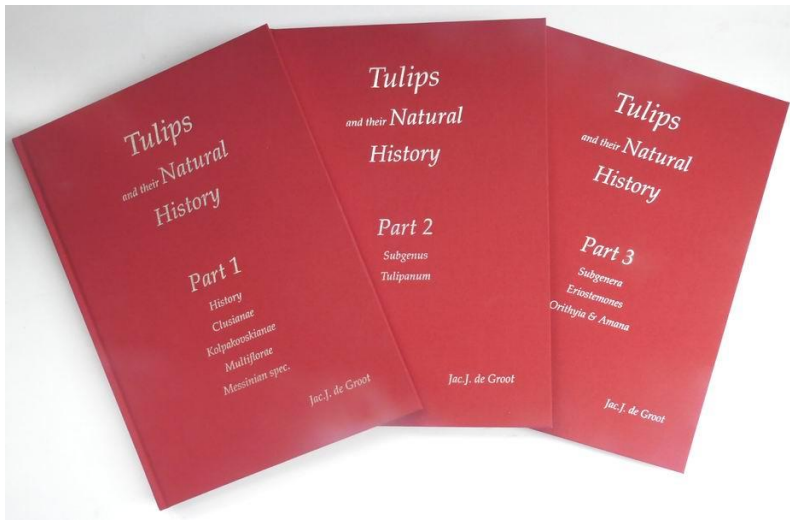


My mission is to make the garden look like the wild areas that I see on my walks where I observe plants growing in every possible place at every possible time of the year - this is nature's way.



**Tulipa sprengeri** is more suited to our cool moist climate than the majority of the tulips it is long lived here and seeds around.

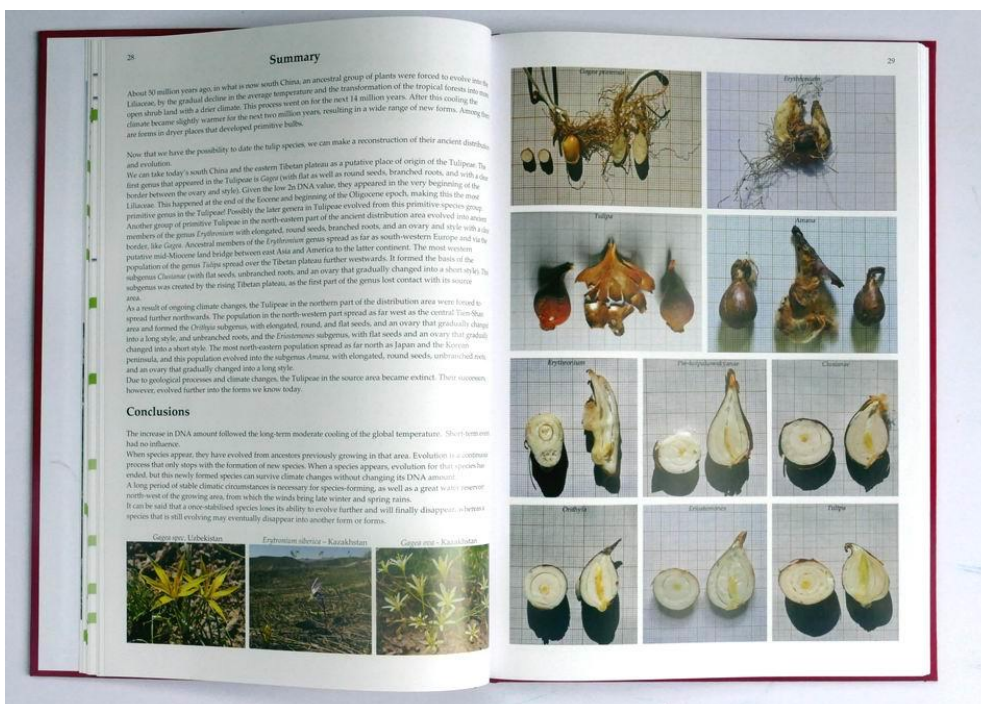




I was delighted when we received a new book [Tulips and their Natural History by Jac J. de Groot](#). As you can see although it is a single work it has been divided into a set of three hard bound beautifully illustrated parts making it easier to handle.

Because of our cool moist climate and their preference for warm drier conditions we have been restricted in the Tulips we can grow so I have concentrated on the related genus *Erythronium*. My researches found both genera evolved from a common ancestor with tulips moving towards a hot dry habitat and erythronium into cooler moist conditions and I am delighted to read that is what

Sjaak (Jac) de Groot, with the help of Ben Zonneveld's detailed studies of the DNA, has explained here. In Part 1 the author has laid out very clearly how tulips have developed over millions of years responding to the various ice ages that caused them to evolve and move to favourable habitats and conditions. The way all this is connected is clearly described. Sjaak de Groot has a lifetime of experience of working with plants professionally bringing extensive knowledge of tulips in cultivation he has also travelled extensively to seek them out and study them in their natural habitat. Part 2 & 3 looks in details at all the species with the characteristics described and fully illustrated with clear pictures.



I like that there are detailed pictures of every part of these Tulip plants alongside the species descriptions which clearly point out the differences that distinguish them. There are also many pictures of the plants growing in their natural habitat.

This is a book on Tulips and their natural history so there is no chapter on how to cultivate them however all the facts about the plants, their distribution and habitat should provide you with all the information to select the ones that are best suited to your climate and conditions. If you are interested in plants you will enjoy this book.





When I was young I rose to the challenges of growing rare and difficult plants by acquiring seed from across the world and in many cases we succeeded. As both the garden and I have grown older it seems I am taking pleasure and realising the value of the plants that first attracted me as a boy, that grow with very little input from us these are the wild flowers that are all around and are all too often called 'weeds'







I am enjoying **Lapsana communis** (Nipplewort) a wild annual that I introduced some years ago. Stems of small yellow flowers dancing decoratively above the beds, add to the diversity attracting a constant stream of pollinators.



Lapsana communis is an annual and it is very easy to pull the plants up after flowering before they shed the seed should you want to control.



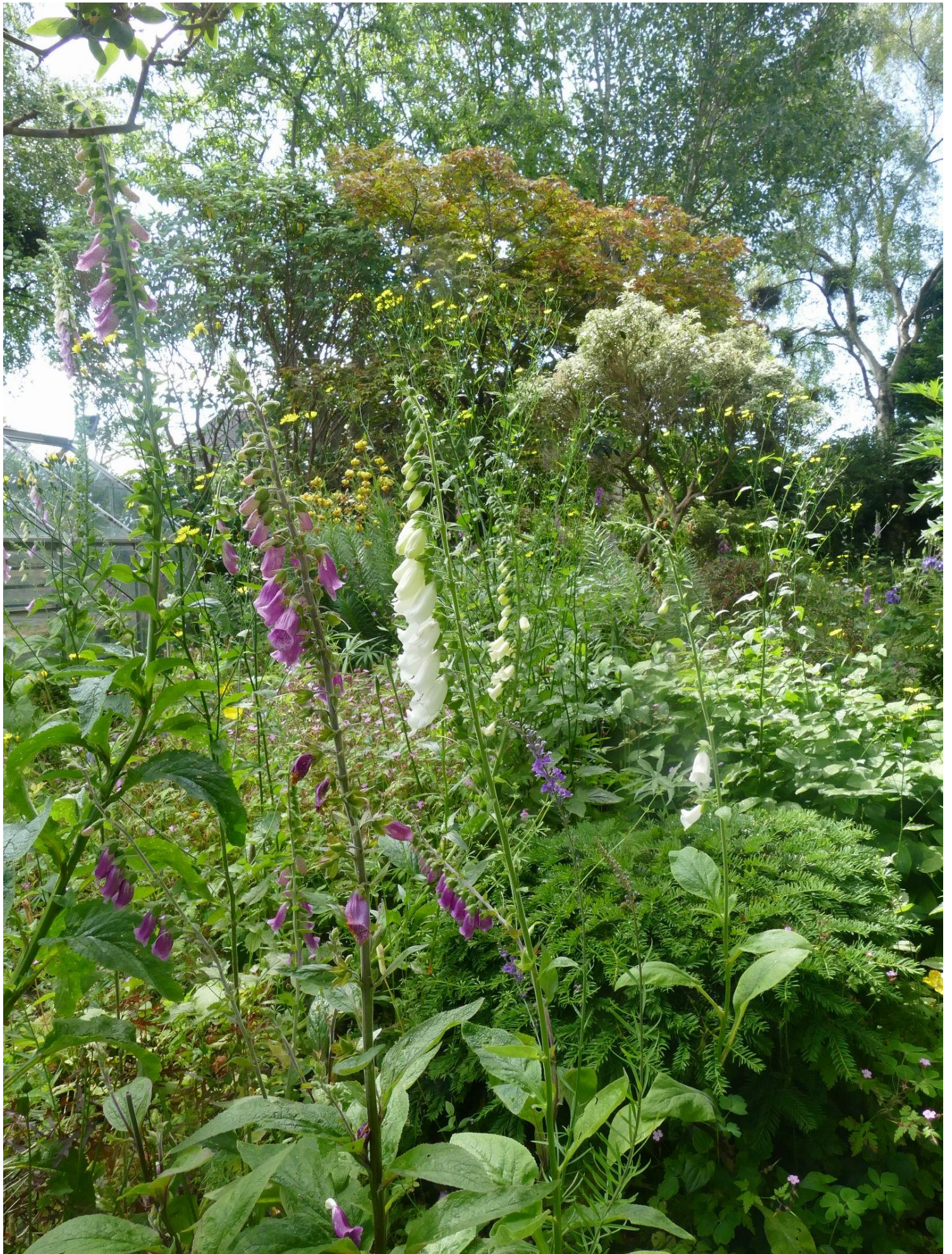


Front and back at this time of year it is the self-seeders that feature in the garden.



**Tanacetum parthenium and Linarea purpurea**





And so the wildness will continue to grow in harmony.....