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Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 12.....18th December 2024



We have come to the end of another year of the Bulb Log and after twenty two years I am wondering how much longer I can go on writing it. Even though, for the last two years, I have reduced the frequency from weekly to monthly I still sometimes struggle to find new things to say but I will try for one more year and see how I get on. The Bulb Log is always seasonal and based around our garden although I do sometimes break out to share pictures from my walks in the local area. I always welcome any comments or suggestions for topics I might cover. The cover picture reflects the season with the garden looking empty with so many of our plants sheltering underground from the winter but, if I look, I can find plenty shoots pushing through the ground and even a few flowers, mostly out of season, but a few such as the Ivy and winter flowering Jasmine that flower in the winter.



There was a time when we would sow hundreds of pots of seeds and that is what you need to do if you want to create a diverse garden flora and with the many Seed Exchanges currently active there is no better time to start with seed. If you want to read more about our methods of growing bulbs from seed click on the picture and you will be able to read a special edition of the Bulb Log I wrote in 2019. We have now reached the age when we are content to allow the plants we have to seed around themselves. Now I only sow a few pots of seed and it may surprise some that most of the seeds I sowed in pots this year were what many call weeds such as *Anthriscus sylvestris* and *Myrrhis oderata*.

You can read about all sorts of methods to improve germination rates but for many plants I have found the best way is often to leave it to nature. For years we struggled to crack the germination code for ***Tropaeolum azureum***. Eventually I gave up trying to trick the seeds and just sowed them in late summer and left them outside exposed to all the weather. By early November I noticed thin growths appearing, not seed leaves but a miniature version of the plant, so I took the pot into a glasshouse to help prevent it becoming slug food. We have been growing this plant since the 1980's and to keep it going we sow seed every year - on the right is this year's tangle of germination.





Under glass we end the year as we started with the hoop petticoat Narcissus flowers. We have had some sub-zero periods in recent months which has slowed the flowering down especially in the pots where the buds are moving very slowly but there are plenty flowers in the sand beds. They are mostly what I consider part of a hybrid swarm that can be found to some degree in the wild but more commonly in cultivation.



The white forms are allied to *Narcissus cantabricus foliosus* and the yellowish ones are towards ***Narcissus romieuxii***.



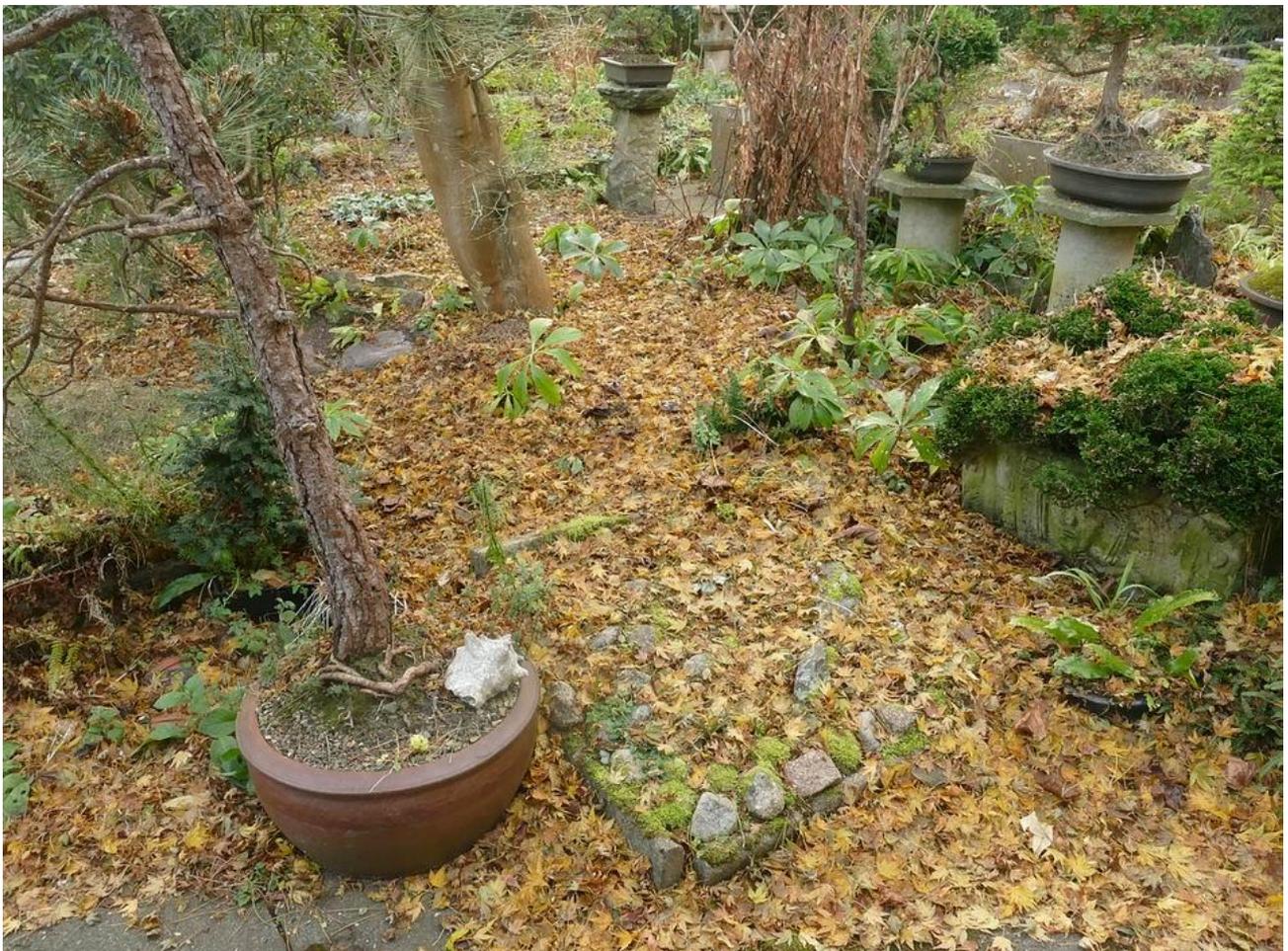
It is fascinating watching the corona change in shape while it continues to expand as it opens, then as it withers from the rim as it ages.



Narcissus romieuxii



The *Acer japonicum* hangs on to its leaves longer than the other deciduous trees in the garden but after several hard frosts they did start to drop their leaves.



During the night another of the named storms moved in bringing torrential rain and strong winds and the very next morning all the leaves were on the ground. I don't remember seeing such a sudden drop it is usually a much more sporadic leaf fall over a few weeks.



There is some welcome greenery to be found - in the foreground the growth of **Anthriscus sylvestris** I planted out as a seedling in the spring and a fern taking its time to die back.



Asarum europaeum is a great ground cover plant for deep shade where it will spread out its round shiny leaves stay green through the winter and only die back after the next season's growth appears in the spring.



Hellebore leaves also hang on through the winter but are best cut off to allow the new growths to grow unhindered by the old growth.



It is the same situation with Epimedium; I also cut their leavers back before next year's growths start to grow.



Like its parent, **Corydalis 'Craigton Blue'** seedlings also lose their leaves when it gets hot and dry in the summer then a new growth of leaves appears in the cool moister autumn. This new growth of leaves stays through all the winter weather - then the flowers appear in late spring/ early summer and the leaves die back when the ground gets dry.



Cyclamen hederifolium grows its new leaves just after the flowers appear in the early autumn depending on the weather these leaves will stay in growth until next August here in the cooler north. I will round off the year by wishing all readers a good holiday season and very best wishes for a happy healthy new year. As has become my tradition the year's Bulb Log covers follow: click on any of the pictures to read that Log.



