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Bulb Log Diary

ISSN 2514-6114

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BULB LOG 01.....15th January 2025



For many of you the old year ended with some dull, grey miserable weather but here in the Northeast of Scotland we had some lovely bright sunny days, but they were cold. Despite the cold I did find the first snowdrops out in the garden and, one day, it even got warm enough for them to flex their petals holding the skirts out so we could see the green tipped interiors. Leading up to the bells for New Year there were some magnificent displays of the Northern Lights which have continued throughout this week for those willing to get themselves out in the middle of the night and go to down to the beach or somewhere where there's darkness and not too much stray light coming from the city.

Now let's start the Bulb Log for a twenty third year - 2025.

With the new year came the snow and that's continued for the first ten days before a rapid thaw set in overnight on the 12th/13th. I haven't been able to catch up with the late tidying however the snow does bring that beauty, and I like the way it highlights the cloud pruned conifer in the front garden so that's why I chose that for this week's cover.

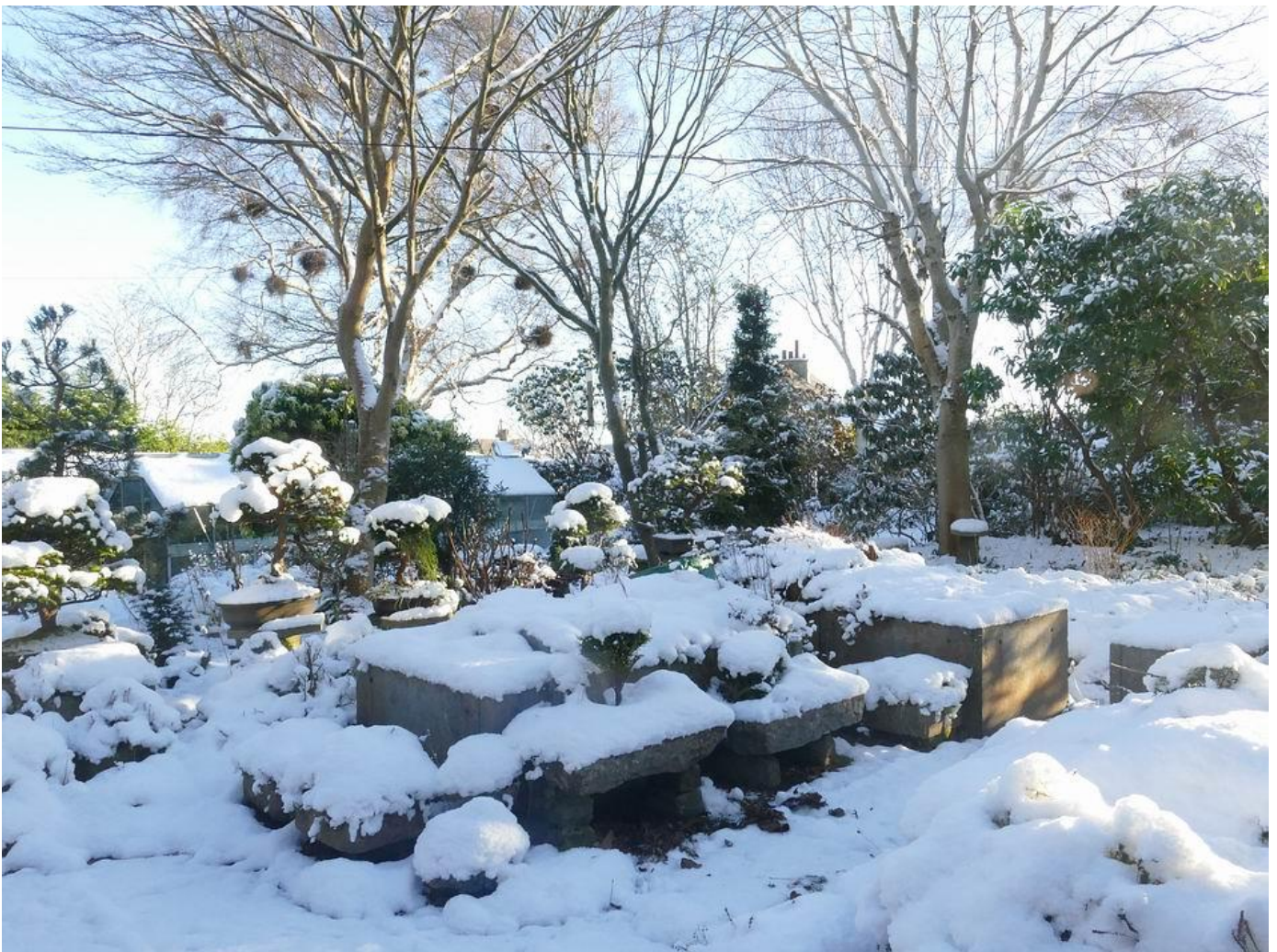
It's been growing there for some 40 plus years and for at least 35 of those I've been clipping it into this shape: it gets an annual clip.



We always planned to have a natural garden where plants were perennial forming self-seeding colonies and not rely on constant digging or replanting with annuals.

However in a very early evolution of the garden we were raising some annual bedding plants to fill in the gaps around the structural plants. Among those we planted Livingstone daisies and at that time we took pictures and entered them in a competition in a Sunday newspaper. We didn't win but we came runner up for which we were rewarded with some garden centre vouchers.

We used the vouchers to get two identical trees: the one planted in the front garden and the one on the left which is exactly the same age (40 +years) has been grown in bonsai pots for the same length of time.



When you layout a rock garden by forming a range of habitats for the plants you also create ideal conditions for wildlife including a number of birds.



These troughs raised up off the ground form perfect little caves where the local Wrens hunt on a daily basis.



As well as trapping windblown leaves the higher voids under the troughs remain free of snow giving birds such as Blackbirds and Robins somewhere to forage when the rest of the garden is covered in a whiteout.

Looking beyond the slab beds and troughs there are many trees and shrubs, both deciduous and evergreen. I cannot emphasise the importance of trees and large shrubs enough as they help form suitable habitats for the many plants and bulbs we grow. In addition, they also provide excellent cover, a home and a source of food for the birds which are an essential part of the garden.





One benefit the trees and shrubs add that we may not always appreciate is seen in the picture above where the ground below the **Pieris** and **Crinodendron hookerianum** is snow free allowing the birds a place to seek for food among the fallen leaves.

We also supplement the food source for the birds with sunflower hearts in the feeders.

Over the last few years these feeders have attracted great flocks of finches, and I had to fill them up every day. Worryingly while there are still good numbers of birds, this year there are considerably lower numbers of Goldfinches which have been dominant but now it is the Chaffinches that are the most abundant.





Hedera helix, the common Ivy, is another plant that provides winter food for the birds.



Cotoneaster berries are another valuable food source through the winter months.



To give a clear view of the already emerging bulbs I have cut back the leaves of the Hellebores and other old growths from this bed, but I am reluctant to cut the attractively coloured stems of this **Disporum**.



This is the first of the **Galanthus** to flower in our garden this season before the big freeze and the snow arrived. Other snowdrops, (below) although they don't mind the cold, will wait in bud until the days lengthen and the temperatures rise before they display their flowers.





There is not much we can do when the garden is frozen and covered in snow other than enjoying the beauty that the white snow cover brings to plants and structures.



Some Erythronium seed stems complete with a few seeds still in them rise up through the snow. This reminds me that the Seed Exchanges have been in operation and the link I made to a [Special seed Edition of the Bulb Log](#) added to the last Bulb Log, failed when I converted it to a PDF, so here it is again.



All through the cold and the snow the Hoop petticoat Narcissus of the bulbocodium group are flowering under the protection of cold glass. It is cold glass now as I switched off the warming cables when we were hit with the great hike in electricity prices of a few years ago. I have written that many of these plants we grow in cultivation are more than likely to be hybrids but they are none the less beautiful and rewarding.



Most of these I am showing are growing planted directly into the sand beds where I can observe the variation between.

These will provide us with flowers through the winter and well into the period when the mass flowering of the early bulbs starts again in a few weeks' time.



Sometimes the difference between the flowers is subtle other times it is obvious, but I take great pleasure studying them growing mixed up together in the sand beds.





[Bulb Log Index](https://www.srgc.net/documents/bulb%20logs/BulbLogIndex.pdf)

Once again, I must thank Tristan Hatton-Ellis for revising and bringing the Bulb Log Index up to date, including all of 2024.

I have uploaded this latest version and the link remains the same. If you get the 2023 version it is coming from your cache - hit the refresh button on your browser to reload the new 2024 version.

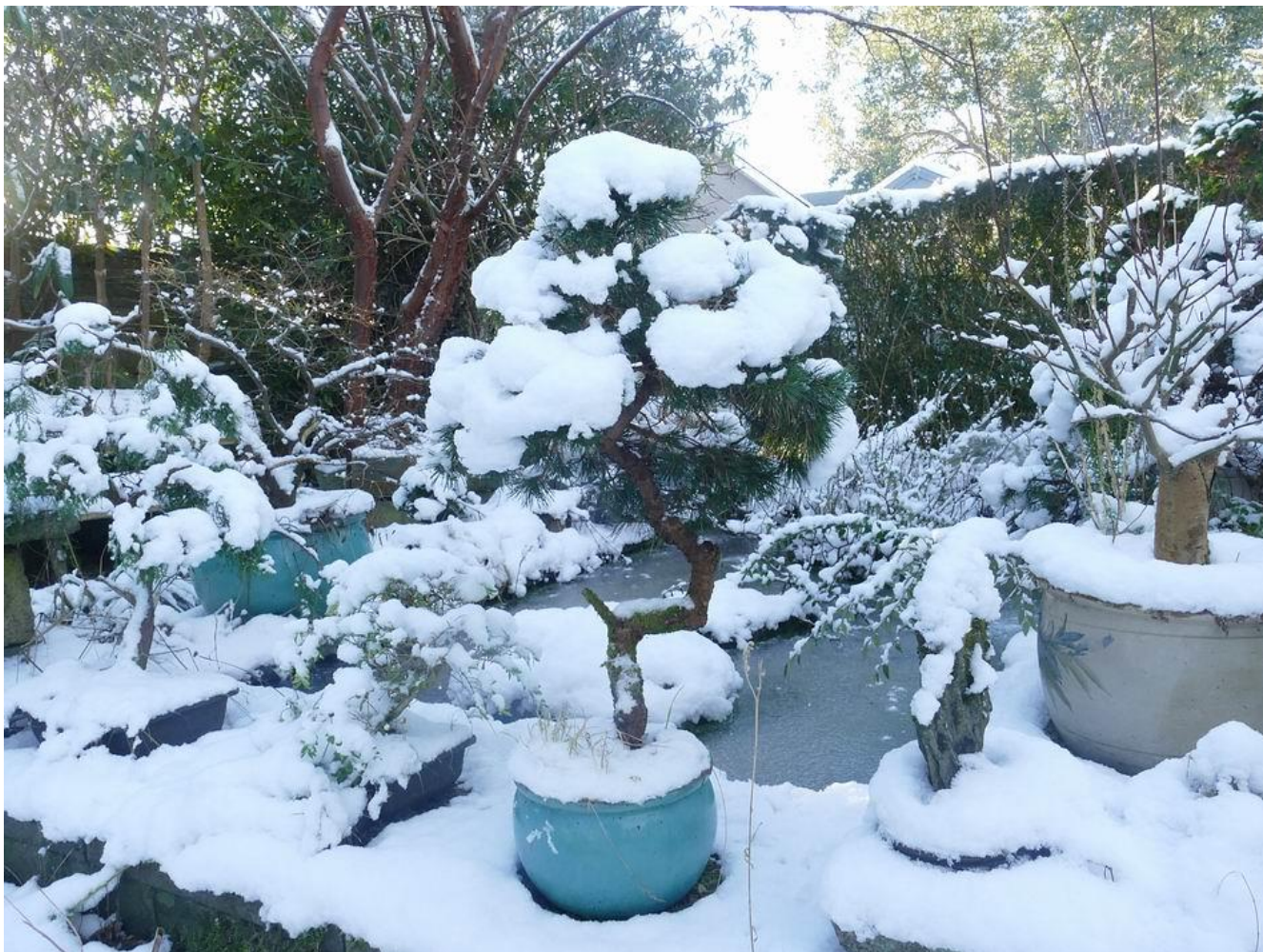
<https://www.srgc.net/documents/bulb%20logs/BulbLogIndex.pdf>



The Index is a valuable resource that will help readers find plants/ topics/ books/ etc that I wrote about at some time in the past 22 years of the Bulb Log.



Tristan also asked me what happened to the *Rhododendron yunnanense* that got blown over in a gale a few years ago that I tried to recover. I used the Index to find where I described this event in [Bulb Log 0522](#) and can give the following update. I did cut the stems back and pushed the root ball back into the ground and as you can see there is some new growth, but it still looks rather ugly. I am tempted to remove it completely but I may wait until spring to see if we get a better regrowth.



Just a few more pictures before I sign off this month: first a bonsai pine tree with white caps.



New growth pushing through the snow promises a green and flower filled spring.



In the expectation that I will have a lot more growth and flowers to share with you next month here to finish off is the same Snowdrop I showed earlier in these pages.....