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# Bulb Log Diary

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The spring explosion of colour in the garden never ceases to amaze me. The early bulbs formed their flowers last year, before they went dormant, and it just takes a few nice sunny days for them to spring into bloom. This week we got those mild conditions when the temperature approached double figures.

After sitting in bud for a week or two, at last the temperature rose enough for the joyous yellow flowers of **Eranthis hyemalis** to show their wide open flowers facing up to the sky.

By encouraging it to self-seed we have an ever-expanding spread of Eranthis

flowing across the garden where it blends perfectly with the white Galanthus and Leucojum. We do not see many pollinators flying this early in the year but none the less Eranthis hyemalis always sets a generous quantity of seed: perhaps they are self-pollinated. The only part I play is to help spread the seed around scattering it into other areas.



We don't even have to go outside to enjoy this display because this is approximately the view we get looking from our sitting room window.

Despite the view from the window when the sun shines, I am drawn outside to get up close with the garden, to examine the flowers in detail, spotting the many differences between them. The first is the difference between *Galanthus* and *Leucojum* which is easily obvious because all the floral segments of the *Leucojum* flower are equal in length, while the *Galanthus* normally have three short and three long ones. There are a few exceptions to that such as *Galanthus* E.A. Bowles where all segments are equal.



***Galanthus* E.A. Bowles**



For those of you who are not familiar with studying plants here are some simple tips. Galanthus and Leucojum growing side by side are easy to distinguish as I have just stated.



There are some significant differences between Snowdrops that are worth noting and easy to spot.



When the flowers are fully open note the degree of the reflex – how high they lift their petals. the leaves are always visible so note the colour are they green, grey or in between in addition check to see if they look wide or narrow.



Narrow grey green leaves.



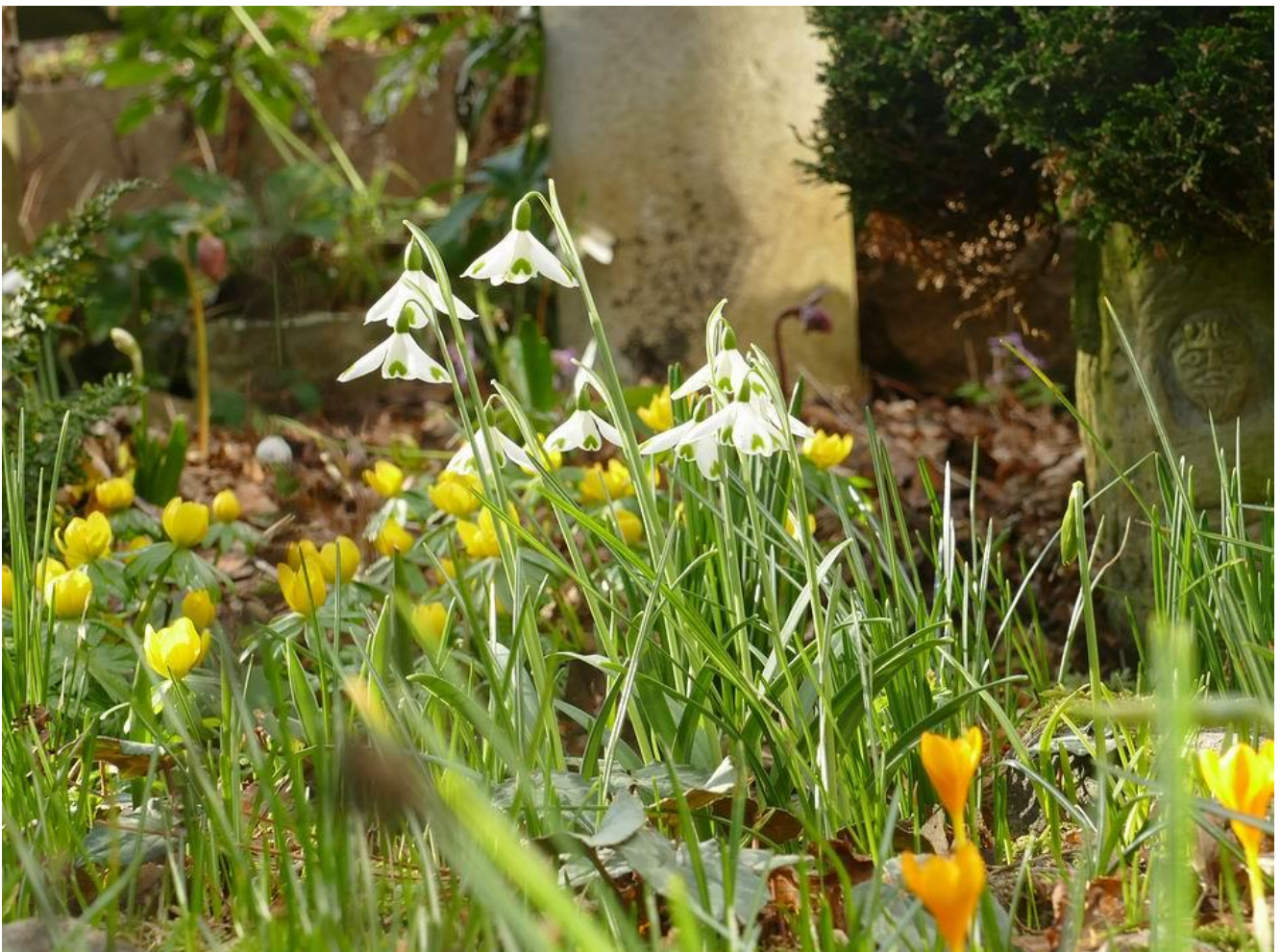
Broad shiny green leaves folded under at the margins – plicate.



Your primary focus should be to enjoy and use the plants in your garden without worrying about what they may be called. One question that I am often asked is how to you get a garden to look like ours? The answer is that it takes time because it is a journey that you are going on. The instant gardens they used to show on the TV were just that - a garden for an instant. A garden without time. They may look attractive at first but how will they evolve?



Our garden is evolving as a partnership with nature alongside any additions or interventions we make; being less tidy and allowing natural mulches to cover and enrich the soils. Splitting clumps and planting the bulbs out in a more natural looking arrangement.



Allowing the plants to seed around will give a more naturalistic appearance.



Anne Wright's excellent [Galanthus Dryad Gold series](#) have taken well to our garden growing and increasing in a number of habitats (above and below).







In recent years we have greatly reduced the number of bulbs we grow in pots - developing mixed plantings directly in the sand plunges where we can enjoy the plants without the need to replot them every year.



The flowers in the sand beds enjoy some degree of protection from the weather.



Among the ones in pots are these two *Narcissus* hybrids involving *Narcissus cantabricus* from the Dryad stable.



[Narcissus 'Maggi Young'](#) and [Narcissus 'Ian Young'](#)



**Narcissus  
'Maggi Young'**

We were delighted and very honoured when Anne Wright chose to name some of her excellent miniature daffodil hybrids after us. She had them registered with the RHS and had the certificates sent on to us.



Some of the miniature Narcissus species can take a cool damp summer so we can also grow them outside such as **Narcissus asturiensis** and **Narcissus cyclamineus**, while those involving *Narcissus cantabricus*, that need a dry summer don't do so well outside for us.



**Narcissus cyclamineus** grows well, naturalising as it seeds around the garden.



Bulbs like **Iris 'Katharine Hodgkin'** that do not set seed will need some help to spread out and look more natural.



**Crocus tommasinianus**



This is an update on the mossy area I discussed last month where a large group of **Crocus tommasinianus** seedlings are now flowering.



Both the **Eranthis hyemalis** and **Corydalis caucasica** growing here were introduced, like so many of our plantings, by simply scattering some seeds and letting the plants establish and self seed.



Nature is a much better planter than I am. Some of the best moments are made by nature who plants in places I may not have considered. These **Corydalis caucasica** seeded down the gap between the stones in a beautifully satisfying way. We should pay attention and be guided by nature.



Guided by nature, I have for many years been planting bulbs in between the rocks of the walls with great success. The plants grow well among the rocks giving a very natural look to these areas



These **Crocus tommasinianus** are guiding the eye nicely down from the upper area, among the rocks, then linking to those growing in the lower bed.



Being less tidy in the garden is not necessarily a bad thing. I have already cleared the old leaves away from this corner, where some **Crocus heuffelianus** grow, but when the wind blows this is where leaves end up so I will need to clear it again - but for now it can look natural.



These **Dutch Crocus vernus cultivars** were among the very first bulbs we planted in the garden some fifty years ago before we discovered the wider world of plants that we went on to explore.



One job I always try and do in February is to tidy and trim the bonsai trees.

With trees of this age (30 plus years) I only trim the roots every five or so years but the canopy and foliage need trimming regularly. February and August are the key months for this task although it is best to also do some soft pinching of the new growth as appropriate throughout the growing season.

The last series of pictures are just to celebrate the glorious spring colour of the Eranthis, if you want to see more, I have two new Video Diary Garden Walks on my YouTube channel First on [22.02.25](#) then again on [03.03.25](#).



**Eranthis hyemalis** flowers enjoying what warmth there is from the sunshine.



Looking natural among the leaf mulches these **Eranthis hyemalis** are all self-sown and they continue to spread out.





*Erythronium dens-canis* is a timely reminder of another genus that is soon to become the star in the garden.



Looking at this *Erythronium caucasicum* makes me think I need to scatter some of the *Corydalis caucasicum* seed here.  
That is how the garden evolves.....