



SRGC

# Bulb Log Diary

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Since last months Bulb Log there has been a big transition of the plants in the garden. Many subjects I showed last month have gone over but they are being replaced by even more growth and colour. It is these changing sequences of flower combinations, along with naturalisation, that continue to delight and interest me in the garden. Last month the Erythronium plunge bed was dominated by Iris ‘Katherine Hodgkins’ whose flowers are now over but they have been replaced by a beautiful creamy white floral froth provided by **Corydalis malkensis**. Because Corydalis malkensis can seed around prolifically

some people call it a ‘weedy’ plant but I see this as a great advantage. It is one of those plants that once established looks after itself. It is only in growth for around six weeks in which time it has flowered, set seed, and gone back underground where it will lie as a small tuber until next spring – how can such a plant be considered a nuisance?

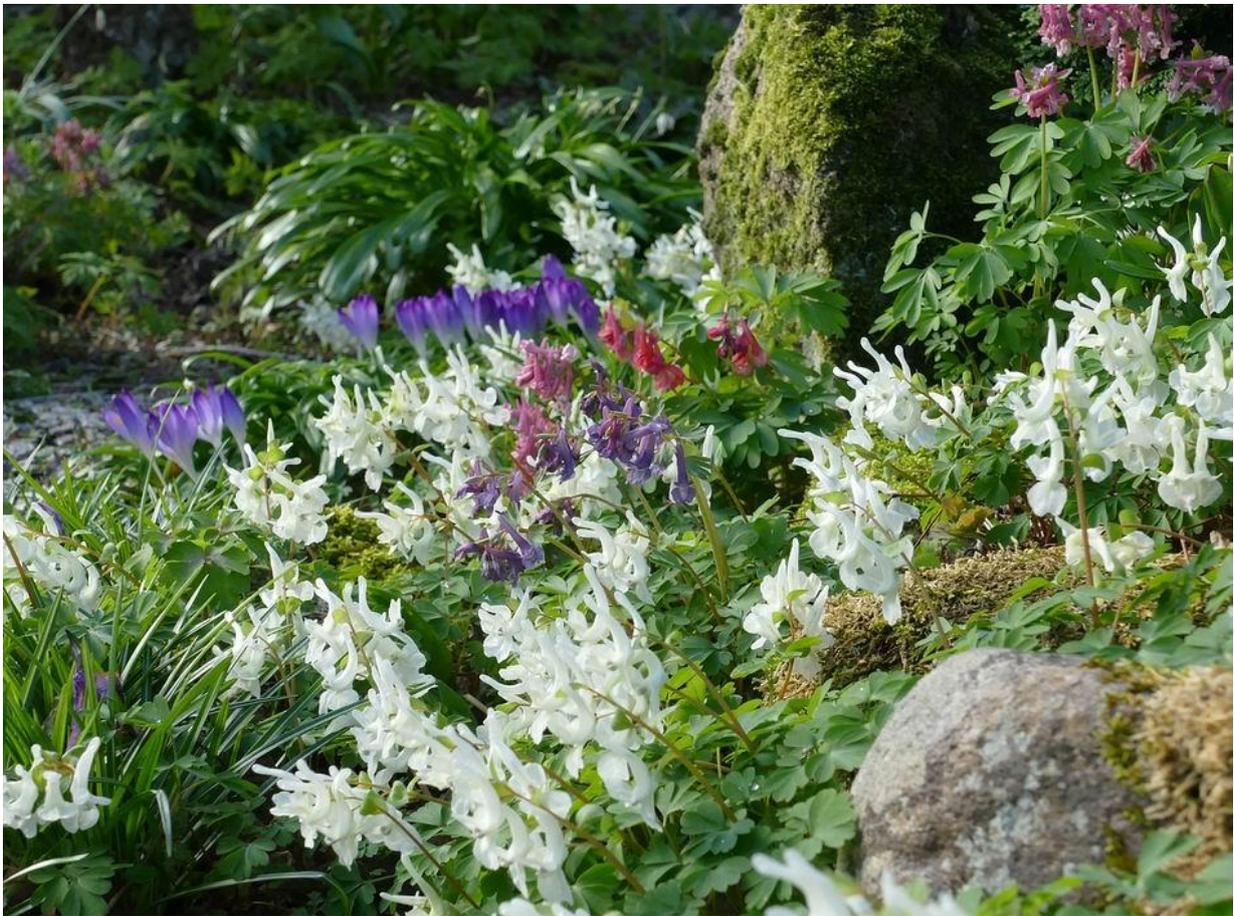


Like all the plants in our garden **Corydalis malkensis** has no respect for the boundaries between beds and paths.



I have seen our garden as a series of beds linked by paths of slabs but now I am thinking it is more one big naturalistic planting that you can walk through by carefully stepping from slab to slab.





Other colours come from *Corydalis solida* and *Crocus*.



*Corydalis solida* brings a range of warm colours including violets and purples which merge and mix with the creamy white.



The range of colours of *Corydalis solida* includes warm pinks and reds.



Although less prolifically than *Corydalis malkensis*, ***Corydalis solida*** also seeds around, as shown here where all the plants on the lower level have grown from the seeds falling from the original planting on the upper level



Seedlings will come in a range of colours typical of the variation we can see in many seed raised plants.



### **Corydalis solida and Hepatica nobilis**

The variations you can get is one of the great joys of growing plants from seed.

The results are you get the plants coming in a range of colours rather than a single block of a clone.

Look at any great painting and what may look like a block of a single colour will more than likely be made up of many subtle variations.

The late artist, Mark Rothko comes to mind as a master of colour.



**Corydalis solida** and **Hepatica nobilis** have proven to be an ideal combination growing happily together in this small rocky planting at the edge of the Erythronium plunge frame.



The Corydalis are the dominant mass planting that leads us nicely from the very early flowering plants on to the next wave of colour dominance - that will come from the Erythronium. We can already spot the growth of later flowering herbaceous plants - these will take their turn in the space as we head into the summer.



Looking across the *Corydalis malkensis* towards another great plant for early flowers **Cardamine pentaphyllos**.



I am sure many of you will have heard of the terms 'lumpers and splitters' when referring to taxonomists. I am a 'sticker'. I accept when new information comes to light the plant names may change but I will stick with the name that I, and probably most gardeners, will have known a plant as for many years.



We have grown this colour form of **Cardamine pentaphyllos** for many years. It is easy to propagate by breaking lumps off the tuberous like roots from the edge of the clump when it is dormant and planting them, not too deep, in a new spot where they will flower the following spring. It is a plant that can take dark dry shade.



I found this paler colour form of **Cardamine pentaphyllos** growing in an old estate that is being dug up and developed. During the winter some trees blew down and as their root pads emerged out of the ground they heaved up some roots of both this and the plant below, so I was able to grab a few bits for our garden.



**Cardamine enneaphyllos**

Rather than a single clone I will now have a variation of colour forms of *Cardamine pentaphyllos* along with the creamy white *Cardamine enneaphyllos*.

Now I have more than one clone I may be lucky and get some seed.





There are well established colonies of **Primula vulgaris** that have been growing, perhaps for more than 100 years, in another estate I walk around and along with the classic primrose colour there are a range of pink forms.



**Primula vulgaris**



I think **Primula vulgaris**, this one growing in the estate, is among the most beautiful of the entire genera. I do not have any of the pink forms but may ask if I can have a pinch of seed from one of these dark forms.



I planted these Pin and Thrum forms of *Primula vulgaris* that I raised from the seed I was allowed to collect a few years ago side by side in the hope that we will become self sufficient for seed in the future.



I have always stated how much we as gardeners can learn from nature and although this is an estate, this area with the Primroses has been left to naturalise for all the time (50years) I have known of it.



The lessons I learn are they will grow through grass and other plants and just look how close to the trees they will grow including seeding into the pockets formed by the root buttress.



This gave me the confidence to plant some of the Primrose seedlings right at the base of our trees where they have established well and are now flowering very nicely.



**Primula veris** also grows nearby.



In another area we have clumps of the hybrid between the Cowslip and the Primrose.



Another Primula that does well long term in our garden is **Primula marginata**. We grow a number of different forms mostly in troughs, raised beds and rocky environments.



**Primula marginata**



**Saxifrage oppositifolia**

I like to stick with plants that will do well long term. What do I mean by that? Many plants will do well for a year or two after you get them but then for whatever reason without a lot of intervention they cannot settle down in your conditions or weather. Most of the plants I show in the Bulb Log have grown well for many years with minimal intervention and these are the plants I choose to propagate. I will take cuttings of these Primulas and Saxifrages that have proven to be reliable in our conditions to plant in other suitable spots.



While other Saxifrages have come and gone these two have sustained, grown bigger and flowered each year.



I constantly get annoyed by the perpetuation of the myth that you should dead head your bulbs because allowing your bulbs to set seed will weaken the bulbs. I wonder if the people who write that have ever done trials, like I have, to test that statement? If they had done, they would have found out that bulbs that are setting seed will grow for 4 to 6 weeks longer than those that have no seed even if they are sharing the same pot. This is extra growth period more than makes up for the small

amount of energy required to form seed. My trials showed the bulbs that set seed were at least the same size as those without if not larger. Nature is a wise operator, and the process of seed production has been refined over millions of years of evolution. Seed is nature's greatest gift to gardeners, and we should humbly accept it as I did when I scattered some *Narcissus bulbocodium* seed into the front drive - where everything has been grown in this way - and now they are left to do it themselves with just an occasional help from me with the wider distribution of the ripe seed.



**Narcissus obesus** and **Muscari aff. discolor** growing in a bulb house sand plunge were also raised from seed.



One of the many plantings of **Trillium rivale** we have all across the garden.



We also raised many of the garden trees and shrubs from seed including this beautiful **Rhododendron uvariifolium**



Seed raised **Fritillaria imperialis** were growing tall and strong until storm force winds blew across the garden bending even their robust stems. However, they quickly straightened themselves to grow back upright.



***Fritillaria imperialis***



In a month the garden has advanced from the early flowering *Galanthus*, *Eranthis*, etc. through the wave of *Corydalis* and beyond. The summer like conditions of this past week have advanced the *Erythroniums* many of which are already in full flower. I will feature them next month.

I am still coming to terms with writing a monthly Bulb Log which is so different from the weekly one I wrote for the first twenty years. When I wrote weekly it was about what was going on in the garden at that very time, but the monthly version is looking back at some of my highlights from the last four weeks. I am already taking pictures of the mass flowering of the *Erythroniums*, which will feature next month, but if you want to see what is current in the garden check out my [YouTube channel](#) where you will find all the hundreds of videos I have posted.