



BULB LOG.....27-02-2003

A number of years ago, I used to neglect the Crocus that we grew in pots due to a lack of time and a lack of prime space under glass. It got to the stage that many were going backwards and tough decisions had to be made. The result was that many rare and so called difficult Crocus ended up taking their chances in the garden and most have never looked back, like Crocus abantensis growing happily in a raised bed and producing a succession of it's beautiful flowers over a number of weeks.



Crocus abantensis

Fortunately I now have more time to spend in the garden and after a review and shake up of what we grow under glass the Crocus collection gets a better deal.



Seed frame ritual

The daily ritual, provided the weather is reasonable: on hands and knees in front of the seed frames to see what has popped up since yesterday, I am sure that many of you have the same joy at this time of year.



Crocus seedlings

Some of the better looked after Crocus seedlings, just germinating, sown last Autumn at 5cm or more deep, just look how strong they are. I am sorry to keep banging on about sowing Narcissus, Crocus, Tecophilea, and other similar bulbous seeds at depth but the more I have experimented and the more I see the results the more I am convinced how much better they do. For those of you who, like me initially, worry that these tiny seeds will never find their way to the surface here is a narcissus seedling just germinated and rudely lifted to be an example.



Narcissus seedling

You can clearly see that it has come up from a depth of 5cm plus.

I wish I had discovered this when I first started growing bulbs from seed, I would not have had to wait so long to flower this beautiful hybrid that I made to imitate the wild *Narcissus x susannae*.

Narcissus x susannae

I fell in love with this plant after seeing it pictured in John Blanchard's wonderful book on *Narcissus*, as it was not available and we grew the parents I decided to make the cross myself. I was amazed, and delighted, at how similar my plants were to the original picture. We have been collecting and raising as many forms of many of the dwarf *Narcissus* as we can, always preferring wild collected seed while it still remains available to us.



Narcissus asturiensis

Narcissus asturiensis is a real charmer and we now have a number of excellent very dwarf forms like this flowering at barely 5cm tall. Now that we have had a few years of collecting our own seed, which I hope will come true, I intend to try and make a few hybrids from this plant this year.



Narcissus cyclamineus

This is another of our favourite dwarf Narcissus and we have many pots of *N. cyclamineus* seedlings coming into flower just now, they always flower just ahead of the ones in the garden.. It is important to get out the paint brush to fertilise the flowers to better your chances of getting a good seed set. Despite being busy with my paint brush this time last year we had virtually no seed on *N. cyclamineus* in 2002, I put it down to the poor weather conditions at the time the pollen was fertile.

One of the highlights of this week, when the sun was shining, was this trough full of *Eranthis* 'Guinea Gold'.



This is all the 'Guinea Gold' we have and it has been built up from a single tuber over the last five years. We have never had any seed set on it. I will leave you this week with a close up.



Eranthis 'Guinea Gold'