



BULB LOG.....11-09-2003



Crocus speciosus

Looking down onto a plant is my least favourite view when taking photographs, as it does not tell you much about the plant. Just occasionally it is worth it for the sheer beauty that stares back up at you.



Crocus speciosus ssp *xantholaimos*

This is the same plant of *Crocus speciosus* ssp *xantholaimos* and while this picture may not have quite the same visual impact as the first one I believe that it tells us much more about this beautiful Autumn crocus which we raised from seed collected in Turkey and distributed through the SRGC Seed Exchange.

One thing this view tells us is that it produces its flowers before the leaves and this brings me to my next topic of watering your bulbs under glass.



Clay & plastic

Last week I described our first watering and all I do for the rest of September is make sure that they do not dry out completely. With those plunged in clay pots I just water the sand plunge if it gets dry all the way through, (this will only happen if we get a lot of warm sunny weather) do not be fooled by the surface looking dry which it often does even when the sand down below is plenty wet enough - check. It is extremely unlikely that the plastic pots will require any more watering until October if they do I will just water the sand bed that they are standing on. Watering into the pots is proportional to the amount of leaf growth showing, not flowers like the crocus above. Do not be tempted to apply additional watering to colchicum and crocus species too soon. Many flower well before they produce their first leaves and the water from the September storm should be sufficient to keep them going until October.



Bulb frame

Normally we get sufficient rain to water the open bulb frames but because it is so dry this year that I have had to water them as well. (See Bulb Log Feedback page on the Forum section of this website for further discussion on watering bulbs).



Corydalis cashmiriana

Corydalis cashmiriana is one of the corydalis that dies down after flowering only to return in late summer with a new set of foliage and the occasional late flower, I do not know if this is how it behaves in the wild or if it is just what it does in cultivation.



Colchicum laetum & *autumnale*

In the garden colchicums continue to appear. It still amazes me just how quickly bulbs can go from not showing to being in full flower in the course of a day but this is what they have evolved to do, utilising that stored food source.

Arum italicum

The seed heads on the Arums are turning a bright orange colour and it will not be very long before the attractive foliage appears, who says that bulbs have a short season? Many are in growth for nearly 12 months.



Arisaema amurense

In the same family *Arisaema amurense* also has bright orange berries but this time they are over a purple spadex making a great colour combination. On the left are the tubers complete with fruiting stem which like a beacon guided us to a clump that we wanted to split up. If we waited until the stems had died down we would not be able to find them so easily. When this season's growth is dying back it is a good time to split many 'bulbs' and the old stems help you to locate them with minimal digging and greatly reduces the risk of damaging them with your spade.

Dactylorhiza are another plant that we split just now using this method to locate them.



Dactylorhiza tubers

The picture shows a pot of Dactylorhiza tubers with the foliage just dying back which we split. You can see in the close up (centre) the light coloured new tubers that we twist off and pot on (right). It is always worth repotting the old tuber with the growth still attached as sometimes they will produce another new tuber before they die back completely. Like many other growers around the country, we have lost a number of Dactylorhiza to fungal diseases over the last few years. The first thing that we noticed about 6 years ago was that when we tipped out a pot of tubers there was not the characteristic smell of horse that we were used to and the tubers did not have that velvety

surface. I have a theory that the mycorrhizal fungi associated with orchids produced this smell and it was attacked by the disease which could then go on and invade the tubers. Things are now improving and I was very pleased when I was greeted by that horsey smell again when I tipped them out of their pots this year.



Cyclamen purpurascens

More cyclamen in the garden, this is a Cyclamen purpurascens which has seeded down into the wall of a raised bed with C. hederifolium in the back ground.