



BULB LOG.....27-01-2004



Bulb house 27.01.04

We have had a few days of sunshine in the last week but now it is back to snow, and the forecasters are predicting that heavy falls of snow and freezing weather are imminent. Inside the bulb house there is a lot of leaf growth now, as well as flowers, so what happens when the temperature drops to below freezing? Well, the leaves and flowers are adapted to take the cold and they often get frozen solid in the bulb house and as long as they defrost slowly they come to no harm, provided that their roots and bulb do not get frozen.



Bulb house plunge

Because we have a shallow plunge the frost can penetrate from all sides including underneath so we have to take the precaution to lay soil warming cables at the bottom of the sand layer in each plunge bench.



Warming cables

On the right is an example of a warming cable. (This is a short warming cable that I built into a shallow box complete with thermostat - I can place plastic propagator trays on top to give a gentle bottom heat for cuttings or seed.) Warming cables are available in any length and we run them length ways below the sand, the runs spaced at 12 to 15 cms apart. I have two cables on the upper plunges one serving each side and a large cable protects the entire ground level plunge.

On the left picture are the controls: the three switches in the grey box allow me to switch the cables on or off separately while the thermostat (with the white cable coming from it) controls the temperature at which the cables come on. The type of thermostat I use has a double adjustment, one to set the temperature that triggers the switch on, and the other adjustment allows me to set when it switches back off - it has a remote sensor connected by a thin flexible copper pipe which is placed 1cm down in the sand plunge. I set the thermostat to come on at 0C and it switches back off again as soon as the temperature rises by 2C. With simple, one-adjustment thermostats, the temperature can rise up to 5C plus before it switches off again - it is well worth trying to get hold of the dual adjustment type. (N. B. Unless you have knowledge of electrical wiring seek a qualified electrician.)



Eranthis snow

Outside, the few erantis that have put in an early appearance poke through the light covering of snow. None of these early-comers have opened their buds yet but they are still a welcome sight.



Crocus biflorus isauricus.

Back under glass it is the crocus that are providing the new delights, like this form of *Crocus biflorus isauricus*. We have a few pots of these, raised from seed, and there is quite a variation in the quality of the lovely dark feathering - we separated out this form as the best to grow on as a clone.



Crocus sieberi ssp nivalis.

Crocus sieberi ssp nivalis is another crocus that flowers early in the year - it is a very short intensely coloured version of this very variable, widespread and easy to grow species.

Fritillaria hermonis.

The frits are appearing steadily now, with some, like this *Fritillaria hermonis*, already with 5cm of growth showing. This is a form from SE Turkey which was originally distributed as *F. crassifolia* and I still occasionally see it under that name at shows. I am not entirely clear where it fits in the review of *F. hermonis* and *amana* done by Bob and Rannveig Wallis - that is why I am copping out and just calling it *Fritillaria hermonis*.



Fritillaria shoots.

This is a selection of some of the other *fritillaria* shoots that are appearing, each has its own distinctive charm. Clockwise from top left - *Ff. pluriflora*, *crassifolia*, *tortifolia* and *stenanthera*.



Frit moment of germination.

Lots of fritillaria seed is now germinating in the outside frames and we are bringing them under the protection of the glass houses, as long as we have space left.



Galanthus 'Mighty Atom'

A good friend gave me this lovely dwarf snow drop Galanthus 'Mighty Atom' last Autumn and it is just coming into flower. He explained that there is some discussion as to what is the "correct" plant to go with this name - whatever, this is a choice little bulb that I am delighted to have.

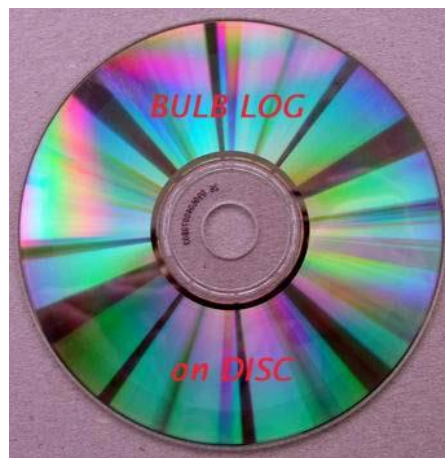


Iris reticulata.

This is a pretty little reticulate Iris that Maggi bought some bulbs of at the Discussion Weekend. Have you ever looked carefully at these flowers ? My problem with these Iris is that while I can find the anthers with the pollen easily , you can see it in the picture, I am never sure where the stigma is to place the pollen onto to get seed - I guess I should ask a bee!

Bulb Log - disc.

As a foot note quite a few people have the bulb log as a book; well, the disc. If you would be interested in a disc please let us know by email. sufficient interest we will look into We would keep the costs as low as would get ploughed back into



been asking if we are going to publish answer is no, but we do have it on a having a copy of the 2003 bulb log on (info@srgc.org.uk) If we get the costs of producing it in numbers. possible and any surplus funds raised improving the web site.