



BULB LOG 50.....16th December 2009



Allium stems and seed heads

Some people are very tidy gardeners- cutting stems back as soon as they start to wither and removing the leaves

before they have completely died back.



In case you had not realised yet I am not one of those – I like to let plants die back naturally. If the leaves fall into a soggy mass and might damage surrounding plants then I am quick to remove them.

When the stems provide some interest in winter like these Allium stems, complete with their treasure of seeds awaiting dispersal, then it would be a crime to remove them in my view.



Arum italicum 'Marmoratum'



Shortia soldanelloides

All gardeners should have a daily walk around their garden as there are always things of interest to see - if there are not then you need to be making plans to introduce a wider variety of plants that will provide year round interest. It does not have to be flowers – many plants provide wonderful foliage in the autumn and winter. The newly emerging leaves of *Arum italicum* 'Marmoratum' are always attractive and will last right through the winter only dying back as the orange seed heads ripen in the summer. Although not a bulb by any stretch of the imagination the leaves on this young plant of *Shortia soldanelloides* attracted me to this raised bed.



Corydalis flexuosa

It is interesting how many 'bulbs' produce their leaves either late in the year or during the winter. The leaves of *Corydalis flexuosa* start to appear in autumn as the moisture levels in the soil increase and the temperature starts to fall. These leaves you can see above will stay green all the way through until the plants flower in the spring/summer and then they will succumb to the hot conditions – even the ones in Aberdeen. Depending on the conditions some of this section of *Corydalis* can produce two sets of leaves in a year – *Corydalis cashmeriana* regularly does that in our garden.



Cyclamen seedlings

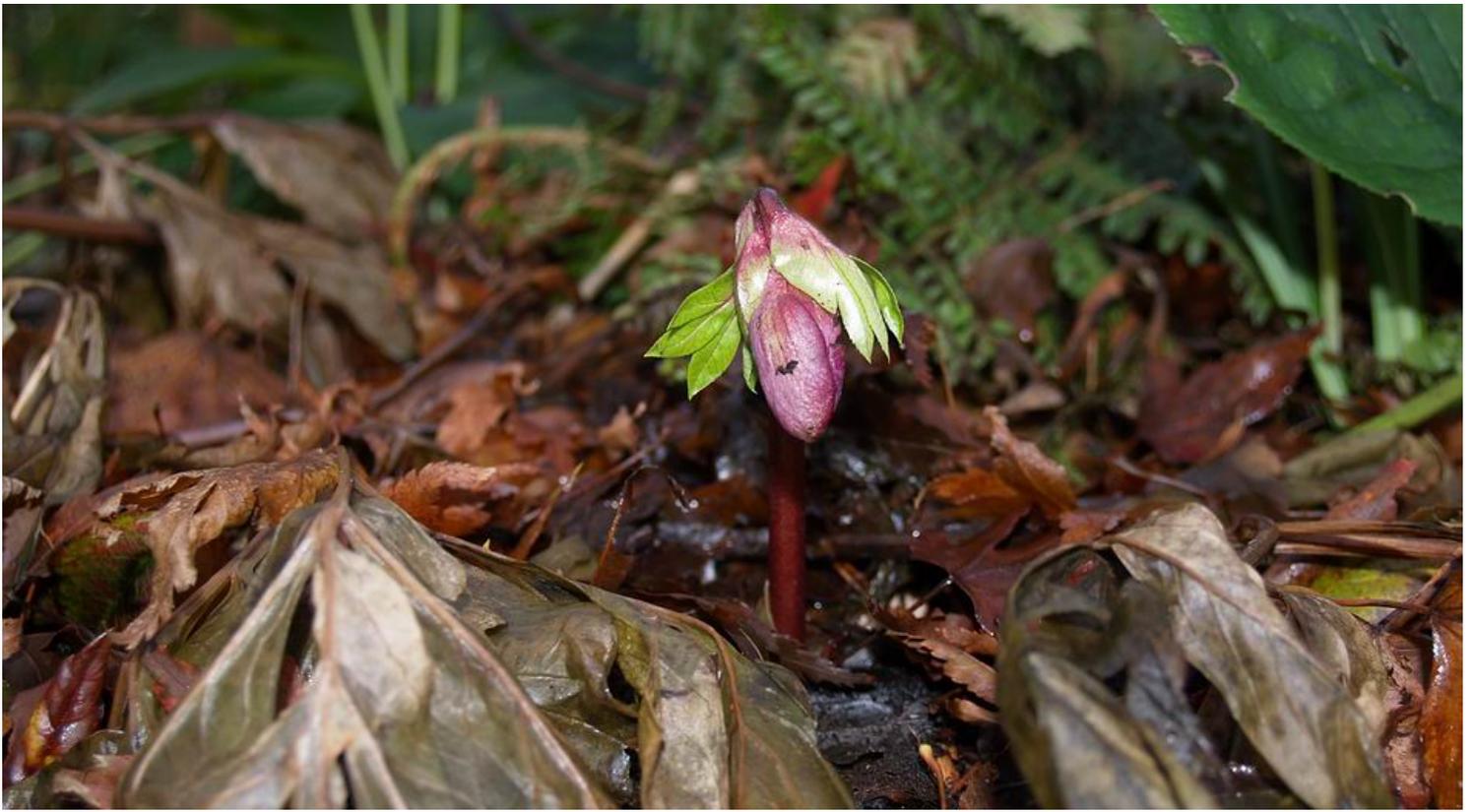
I have still to lift most of the fallen tree leaves; a job that I have not had time to get round to yet. I have been away quite a lot giving talks and when I am at home the weather has not been suitable to gather the leaves. Now I am at home until the end of January so I hope to catch up with this and a number of other jobs around the garden. The seedling cyclamen leaves look good among the fallen leaves of an Acer the only problem being that this area of gravel was intended to be a path – ah well, plants rule OK.



Galanthus in bed

The Galanthus I showed a week or two ago have now opened their flowers.





Hellebore

As I was down getting the picture of the Galanthus flowers something purple pushing through the fallen leaves caught my eye – it is an early bird Hellebore flower.



Plunge frame with mulch

After I mentioned liverwort in the bulb log an interesting discussion then took place on the [forum](#) with various suggestions of how to control this problem. I have tried most of the suggestions without any success and in my view there is no easy control: you have to remove it all by hand. Covering it over to exclude the light will also work and that is what I have done for a few years now on these sand plunges which were plagued with liverwort and other weeds. All are now suppressed plus I have discovered that the Erythroniums in this bed much prefer this mulch as it helps keep a more even moisture level in the growing medium.



Narcissus falling over

The pot of Narcissus that has its stems falling over is a sure indication to me that it needs a good watering. I use this type of indicator all the time to ensure that I get my watering regime correct. It is better to let the bulbs just start to dry out like this, then give them a very good soaking, than it is to give them a trickle every few days which could lead to them being too damp which can increase the risk of wet rots.



Narcissus romieuxii ‘Craigton Clumper’

Once I see some of the stems falling over I will water all the pots that are in active growth especially when they are packed with as many bulbs as I can cram in. This 7 cm pot of my own selected seedling of *Narcissus romieuxii* is prodigious in both increasing and producing masses of flowers hence I named it ‘Craigton Clumper’



Narcissus romieuxii bud

I will continue on my mission to try and sort out the hoop petticoat narcissus we grow - I will share a few more of my observations with you.

I showed how the length of the pedicel is used as one of the indicators another is the length of the petals compared to the corona. This is perfectly illustrated in this bud where you can see that the petals are exactly the same length as the corona. Other forms or species can have the petals either shorter or longer than the corona.

Once the flowers are open you just need to flex the petals forward to compare them with the corona.

If you look carefully you will also see that the style is also poking out of the bud beyond the end of the corona.



Narcissus albidus

I have been looking very closely at the various plants that I have as *Narcissus albidus* and they are different in that the end corona has a flange that, like the flange on a pipe, folds out from the flared corona.



Narcissus romieuxii cross

These otherwise similar hybrid seedlings do not have a flange – the corona simply continues to funnel outwards while some turn back inwards on themselves.



Narcissus albidus



Narcissus romieuxii cross

Here they are again to compare side by side notice the flange on N. albidus to the left and how the corona of the N. romieuxii cross curls in at the end.

It just shows that no matter how often you look at these flowers you can always see more if you take the time to study them carefully.

I would be interested to know if this flange on the forms of N albidus that I have is consistent in the wild populations or if it is just a feature of certain individuals?



Narcissus romieuxii

Here is an oddity – a *Narcissus romieuxii* with twin flowers.



Narcissus romieuxii

Looking into the face of the flowers you can see that the top flower is not complete so it is a mutation rather than a genetic twin flowered form. Last year I showed a pot of twin flowered seedlings in a bulb log and I am now waiting anxiously to see if they are twin flowered again this year.



Narcissus 'Joan Stead'

My pot of Narcissus 'Joan Stead' is just coming out and I can see that I have a problem with a slug or snail chewing away at the flowers – I must do something about that. Last year I could not decide if I had more than one clone in this pot or if the lobing of the corona, which is one of the features of this form, is variable from year to year. Once it is fully in bloom I should be able to tell and if I decide there is more than one clone then I will split it in full flower to clone it out.



Narcissus 'Cedric Morris'

No mistaking the first of the trumpet daffodils to flower: this lovely giant form of *Narcissus asturiensis*.



Crocus imperati suaveolens

As I inspect the bulb house I cannot help but notice that *Crocus imperati suaveolens* is even earlier this year with the buds just waiting for a mild day to open and reveal the beautiful dark violet interiors.



Iris vartanii

This is the first time I have flowered this interesting winter flowering species from Israel.





Tropaeolum azureum seedlings

Last year only a few of the seeds of *Tropaeolum azureum* germinated in this pot so I just left it and now you can see the taller plants that germinated last year have been joined by a host of newly germinating stems reaching skywards looking for support.



Leucojum vernal shoots

Another promise of things to come are these *Leucojum vernal* shoots pushing through the ground where they will wait until early next year before they flower.