



BULB LOG 01.....3rd January 2009

Welcome to a New Year and a new look Bulb Log. We have decided to use the popular and universal PDF format for this year and would be very pleased to have your comments good or bad about this change; contact us by email or through the bulb log feed back pages of the Forum. I would strongly suggest that for optimised viewing one uses the (free to download) latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader; this allows for greater compression of the file without image loss.



Bulb Houses

Here are the three basic bulb houses which provide all the glass protection we have but you can also spot the tell tale signs of boxes of pots of bulbs plants and seeds lying everywhere.



Crocus side of bulb house

Only a few of the autumn flowering crocus are still in flower but many of the Spring ones are already in the advanced bud stage. Plants like *Crocus imperati* ssp *suaveolens* will open their flowers on the first mild sunny day we get.



Narcissus in bulb house

The Narcissus are taking over as the stars of the glass houses with both *Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus* and *N. 'Camoro'* having many flowers now open. There are masses of buds showing and it promises to be a great flowering year for our narcissus.



Two Narcissus flowers side on

I want to make the point that we should be really looking at our plants in some detail – a quick glance at the picture above and you see two of the same flower but look again. The anthers on the left hand one protrude well beyond the corona – they are exerted – and the style also extends much further out than the right hand one. Now look where the petals are on the flowers and you will notice that on the left hand one they join further up the conical tube and that corona is therefore shorter in proportion than the right hand one.

This view of the same two Narcissus flowers confirms that the proportions of the tubes are different - with more of the corona extending beyond the point where the petals join on the right hand flower.

Once you start looking at these details you can start to see the differences in many similar looking plants.

To my eye the left hand flower has a much more elegant shape with approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of the tube below the petals giving a more pleasing proportion than the $\frac{1}{2}$ way join on the right hand one.



Two Narcissus

The proportion and symmetry of objects plays a big role on how we see them and this has been understood by the great artists for hundreds of years. The so-called 'Golden Ratio' can be found in most of the great works of Art and Architecture across the world so it is not surprising that we favour flowers that comply roughly with this rule of thirds. So the left flower with the petals appearing roughly $\frac{2}{3}$ along its length should be more universally appealing than the one on the right where they appear about $\frac{1}{2}$ way along the length.



Two Narcissus flowers face on

Changing to a face on view the balance is changed with the right hand flower now having a pleasing proportion with the petals appearing to extend beyond the rim of the corona. I think the truth is that they are both beautiful flowers each with its own distinct appearance and it is up to us to give them more than a cursory glance and study them in some detail. The one on the left is *Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus* and the right hand one is *N. x 'Camoro'*.



Pot of Narcissus seedlings

This is turning out to be a fascinating pot of seedlings raised from an open pollinated *N. 'Camoro'*. When I check back my records this is not the first year of flowering and the first flowers were all single it is now that the bulbs are larger that they are producing this twin flowers on a stem as seen on the right hand flower. The second stem rising from the same bulb also has two flowers to come, as does the unopened stem to the left (which seems to be coming from the same bulb as the two stems with a single flower) – I will have to check this out later in the season.



Twin flowered Narcissus seedlings

Just to remind you here is that twin flowered stem that I showed in recent bulb logs.

The interesting thing is that both the flowers are open at the same time, the upper blooming about a week after the first one.

I cannot think what the other parent might be that would give this twin flowers.

The only one that comes to my mind would be *Narcissus triandrus* but I cannot remember if these two plants have been in flower at the same time- it would have had to be a late flower on 'Camoro' that could be pollinated from *N. triandrus*.



Yellow flowered Narcissus seedlings

Now if you are following the thread and looking at the flowers carefully you should have noticed this single yellow flowered seedling in that same pot from the same seed parent. This is also most unusual as I have never had a yellow flower from any of the seedlings I have raised from *N. 'Camoro'* they have always been white or just off white.



Yellow flowered Narcissus seedlings face

This is the same flower photographed looking into the face of the flower. The anthers are not yet dehiscent and the filaments will lengthen moving them forward as they do.



You can see that its yellow colour makes it stand out against the other white seedlings but the proportions of the flower are otherwise very similar.



Narcissus seedling ex 'Camoro'

This is another Narcissus seedling ex 'Camoro' from another batch of seed most of the flowers in this pot look very similar to the original 'Camoro' but this one has a much wider flared corona giving it a flatter face. Another interesting character in this flower that I will have to watch and see how it develops is that the anthers are not bunched together but held in two ranks of three.



Lilium mackliniae seedlings

With a good number of fine days I have been able to mulch most of the beds around the garden and while doing the general tidying up in preparation for this task I discovered a rather neglected box of *Lilium mackliniae* seedlings under a pine tree. The label has since been lost but seed was probably sown at least six years ago and under proper management these seedlings should have been planted out and flowering by year three or four at most. However I turned the box out and there are around a hundred small bulbs which I have now planted out in various beds and the biggest bulb could flower in 2010. This is the problem when you try and grow too many things, some get neglected but the good thing with bulbs is that they are true survivors and will survive this treatment hoping for better conditions to come.



Clump of Crocus corms

While I was digging a hole to plant some of the *Lilium mackliniae* I disturbed this small clump of *Crocus* corms.

Despite the fact that they are well advanced in growth with both roots and shoots extended they will come to no harm if I handle them carefully.

Because I mulch the beds on a regular basis the top 30cms at least is a very friable woodsy soil making it easy to handle bulbs in this advanced stage of growth as the soil just falls away.

It would be very different if I were gardening on a heavy clay then I would be in great danger of damaging the roots.



Crocus corms

Having already disturbed these crocus I took this opportunity to split them and replant them as individual corms.



Liverwort on top of box

I have a terrible problem with liverwort growing on the surface of seed pots and also on the fish boxes that I use to grow on many bulbs and also for sowing larger quantities of seeds.

Despite trying various methods I have found the only way to control it is to remove it by hand and preferably as soon as you notice it so that it does not form a complete mat like this. It is relatively easy to remove it from the boxes of bulbs at this time of year as I simply skim off the top layer of gravel complete with the offending liverwort. I must say that I do have a chuckle when I hear the 'garden experts' advising gardeners who are having a liverwort problem to spread a layer of gravel as it does not like the free draining medium. In my experience that is exactly what it does like as my biggest problems are on the gravel covered pots, boxes and beds.



Box cleaned off

Here is a box cleaned of the offending layer and awaiting a new mulch. Can you identify what is growing in this box?



This time I applied a layer of composted shredded prunings which is much more effective as the liverwort does not get such a quick hold



Eranthis 'Guinea Gold' early growth

If you look carefully you can make out the arched over stem, cocooned in a protective skin, that will break through in around a month to hold its golden yellow flowers aloft.



Corydalis solida

Another box holds *Corydalis solida* which also has well advanced shoots.



Mystery plant

What do you think that this one might be? Again these structures were sitting just below the surface layer that I scooped off to remove the liverwort. I will reveal the identity of this plant next week.