



BULB LOG 03.....21st January 2009



Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus seedlings

Narcissus are the dominant flower in the bulb house again this week as each day that is not freezing sees more buds opening. This picture is not a pot of mixed bulbs but what it does show clearly is that many of the white flowers have quite a yellow hue when in bud and as the flower expands this gradually fades to reveal a good clear white.



Narcissus 'Cedric Morris'

Almost four weeks later than last year the first flower on Narcissus 'Cedric Morris' opened this week. With this flower the intense yellow is obvious from the bud to the very long lasting flower. The reason that the flowers of N. 'Cedric Morris' last so long is that they are sterile and so cannot produce any seed which results in the flower never getting the message that its job is done so it stays bright and fresh looking for months.



I do not normally write that a plant is sterile because, as soon as you do that, either the plant suddenly produces a few seeds or someone tells you that their plants sets good seed so in this case I am intentionally tempting providence in the hope that this fantastic small trumpet Narcissus will produce some seed just to prove me wrong.



Narcissus bulbicodium



The pictures above show the stages as the first form of **Narcissus bulbicodium** opens its flowers this year. Perhaps the most commonly seen form of **Narcissus bulbicodium** in cultivation is the subspecies **conspicuous** which is widely available but on the whole it is a very variable species with many fine forms well worth seeking out.



Narcissus flower opening



Narcissus Stigma

Watching the flowers of **Narcissus romieuxii** forms and hybrids unfurling is fascinating – it is a miracle of nature seeing the way the corona is folded to fit in the bud. As I have mentioned before the colour they display as they open will not always be the colour they have when the flowers are fully out. Also the flower will continue to grow for some time after it opens before it achieves its full size.



Narcissus stigma close

A big advantage to detailed pictures is the fascination of seeing the details on the computer screen. Above you can see clearly the sticky receptive tip of the stigma waiting to receive pollen. Once some pollen is placed on the stigma it starts to grow down the tube, which you can also see the mouth of above, and if conditions are favourable it will reach the ovary and fertilise the ovules that will result in a good set of seeds.



Sectioned Narcissus flower

I carefully sectioned this flower to show the important parts for reproduction. The filaments hold the anthers complete with their supply of golden pollen ready for the visit from a pollinating insect or more often the case in our bulb house it is me with my paint brush. One feature of these species of Hoop petticoat narcissus is that the anthers are held at right angles to the filaments making them more efficient by offering pollinators a larger surface of pollen – apart from a few subspecies they are also held in a bunch rather than scattered. The style often protrudes well beyond the anthers in an attempt to get at the pollen attached to the body of a visiting pollinator from another clone. The pollen fed by the sticky sugars on the stigma grows all the way down the tube of the style to the ovary.



My pot of **Narcissus 'Joan Stead'** shows well the style and stigma thrust forward out of the flowers to attract any pollinating insects that may be around. Unfortunately there are very few such insects around Aberdeen at this time of year so if I want seed I do the pollen transfer with a paint brush.

However as much as the flowers are designed to attract pollen from another plant, nature has an insurance policy. The anthers extend and the style contracts before the flower fades and they can then self pollinate.

Narcissus 'Joan Stead'

***Narcissus romieuxii* super plus**

There are many advantages to raising bulbs from seed such as getting vigorous healthy individuals and keeping as wide a genetic range in your collection as possible.

One of the great pleasures and the real excitement comes when you spot one that stands out from the bunch - the flower on the left is one of those.

A self sown seedling from *Narcissus romieuxii* it has a very large flower.



***Narcissus romieuxii* super plus**

All three seedlings in this self sown batch have promise but this particular one is 'super plus' as I have nicknamed it just because of its larger than normal size and great proportions.



As this picture shows the flower is large at 4.5cms across at the mouth of the corona which is also lobed.



***Narcissus* super plus**



Narcissus 'Camoro' seedlings

This is a pot of seedlings from Narcissus 'Camoro' and again it has some very good individuals that have excellent features.



Narcissus 'Camoro'



Narcissus 'Camoro' seedling

The seedling, (above right) has a bigger more pleated flower than the parent on the left making it to my eye even more attractive.



Narcissus seedling ?cantabricus

Another pot I have built up from a self sown seedling bulb that I found in the sand plunge some years ago is this beautiful pure white Narcissus. I have yet to positively identify it and may never know its parents but I think it is a form or hybrid of *N. cantabricus* or possibly *N. albidus*.



Crocus imperati suaveolens

Some of the early spring or perhaps they are better described as late winter flowering Crocus are just coming into bloom. This very etiolated **Crocus imperati suaveolens** did open its first flower on a mild sunny day but they very low light levels are just encouraging it to grow taller and taller as it tries in vain to find higher light levels.



Crocus michelsonii

In a similar state is **Crocus michelsonii** with a single flower extending ever sky wards.

Luckily I find that *Crocus michelsonii* always sends up a second flush of flowers after the first ones have past and by that time the light levels are usually higher so the flowers remain a bit more in character.

A beautiful *Crocus* none the less and I just hope we get some bright mild conditions to not only open the flowers but encourage fertilisation.



Crocus laevigatus

Finally for this week that favourite that spans the autumn, winter and spring flowering periods- *Crocus laevigatus*.