

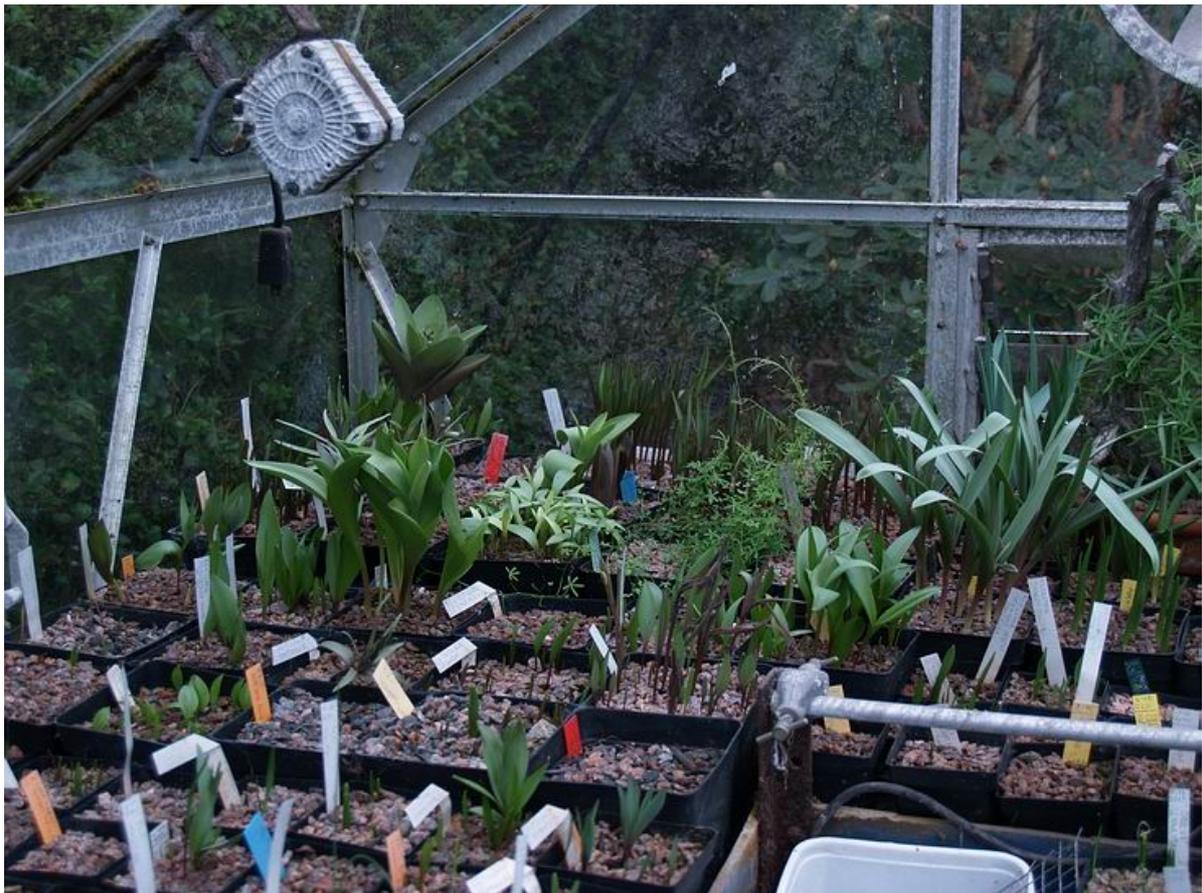


BULB LOG 11.....18th March 2009

While I am still in the USA I thought I would show you around the Frit-house as it was the week before I left home. There has been so much to show in the other bulb houses with Narcissus, Crocus and Corydalis recently that I have hardly mentioned the fritillaries but they are active and have fairly shot up in the last few weeks.



The yellow flowers (at the left hand side of shot) are *Crocus gargaricus* and *C. civijicii* flowers brought in from an outside frame to encourage pollen growth and a good seed set.



Some are obviously much more advanced in growth than others and many now have flower buds clearly visible. The larger grey green leaves on toward the middle right belong to a tulip and behind them just disappearing out of the picture is *Tropaeolum azureum*.



Fritillaria alburyana* and *F. pudica

This picture shows clearly the scale between the small yellow flowers of *F. pudica* next to the giant ones of *F. alburyana*. The *pudica* flowers last for some time but unfortunately the *alburyana* flowers go over all too quickly. As soon as the pollen is ripe these beautiful flowers start to lose their freshness and within a few days they are well past their best.



I have two distinct forms of this beautiful plant - the one on the left is the one that is most often seen and has a slight purple tinge to the flowers.

The other one I got from the late Harold Esslemont over twenty years ago and was from the original introduction of this species. It has, you can see on the right, pure pink flowers. Unfortunately I find this one much more difficult to grow and it is one of those bulbs that you build up and think you have cracked it then it suddenly dwindles. I have almost lost it on several occasions but thank goodness it still hangs on. This form also flowers later so this picture is a scan from a slide.

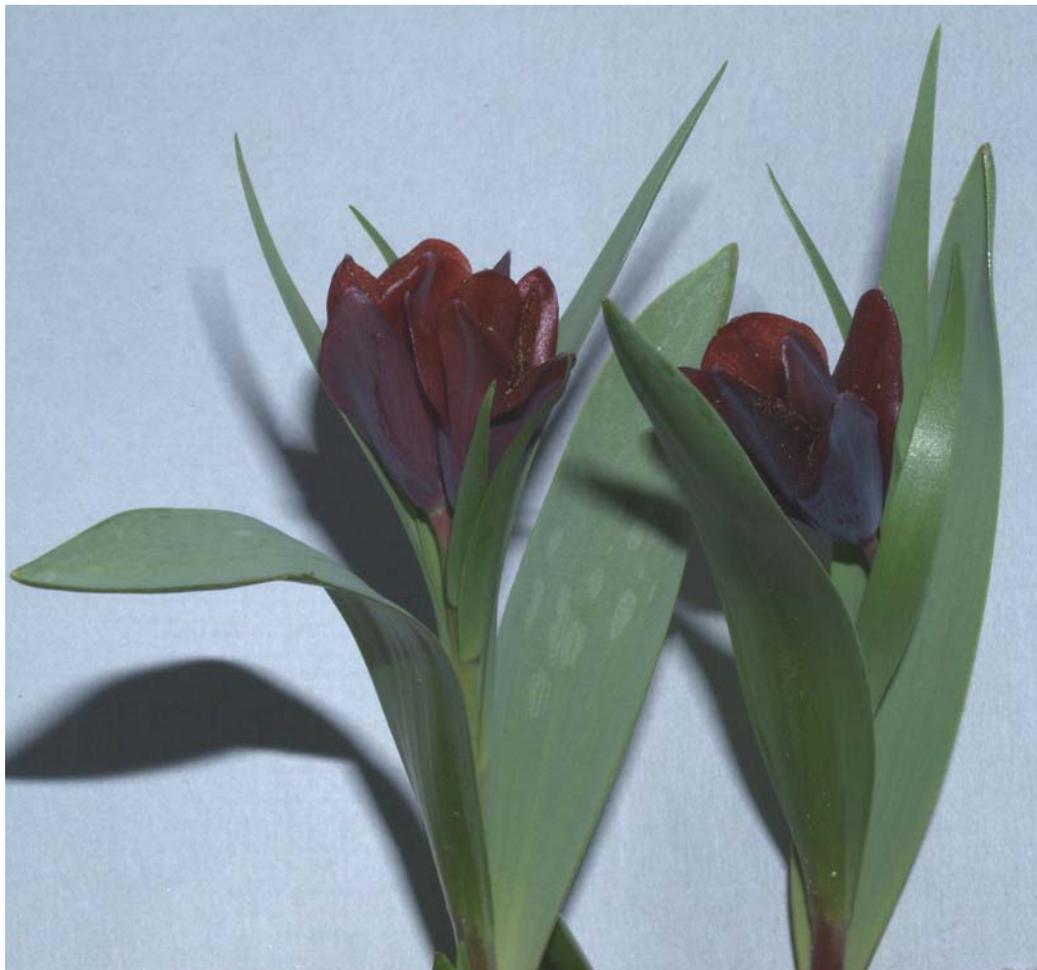


***Fritillaria alburyana* ex H.E**



Fritillaria armena

I have of course been pollinating the *F. alburyana* but with all that lovely pollen I have also attempted to cross it with this early flowering form *Fritillaria armena*.



Fritillaria armena

You might wonder why ?

Well I have seen pictures of some lovely hybrids involving *F. alburyana* found in the wild I think they were with *F. pinardi*.

I decided to try and replicate what nature has done but since my forms of *F. pinardi* are not quite out yet I pollinated this *Fritillaria armena*

Time will tell if I have been successful in getting a fertile union and if the resulting seedlings are as nice as the ones in the pictures I saw.



Fritillaria davidii

There are some beautiful pictures posted on the forum by DB of this unusual Chinese species in flower – something I have not yet achieved. I am fascinated by this strange plant – it is very unlike any other *Fritillaria* and one has to wonder why it is a *Fritillaria* at all.

From looking at it and the very short period of experience I have of growing it I think it is a relic species - an ancient ancestor of what we know as *Fritillaria*. I once had a bulb of it before but it rotted off in the summer and all that as left were the small brown rice grain bulbils that you can see below the leaves above. I was given another chance when I was kindly given this bulb, by the successful grower and forum member mentioned above, last year.

I was determined not to lose this one so I tried planting it much nearer the surface this time to try and prevent it rotting like the last one. This has worked and it is growing well but the amazing thing to me is that the new shiny white bulb is forming just on the surface and it is covered in these brown bulbils that break off very easily. This bulb reminds me of the bulbs that are formed by *Dicentra cucularia* and they grow just below the surface, often the top of them becomes exposed. I will continue to grow it like this and keep my fingers crossed that next year I can get it to flower.



Fritillaria chitralensis

I am relieved to see these flowers on *Fritillaria chitralensis*. If you remember I lost some bulbs to wet rot last year and had to mount a rescue operation to save the others. Now I have three good bulbs, a few smaller bulbs budded from the cleaned up remains of the rotten scales and a few seedlings into their second year of growth.



Fritillaria chitralensis is a very beautiful species that grows in the high valleys and passes of the Chitral area between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

As it is unlikely that it will be reintroduced again in the near future it is important that I keep it going.

After the shock of nearly losing it to the rot last year I have decided to plant one of these bulbs into the garden during the summer and hope it grows there.



Fritillaria chitralensis

I get plenty lovely pollen and fertilise it with my paint brush which results in fat pods full of what looks like good fertile seed however I have been extremely disappointed by the apparent lack of viability of these seeds.

The few seedlings I do have germinated last year from a pot sown in 2001.



Fritillaria stenantha

I will leave you this week with another of the first Frits to flower every year - *Fritillaria stenantha*. Next week's bulb log may be a day or two late as I will only just be back from my trip to the USA.