



BULB LOG 18.....6th May 2009

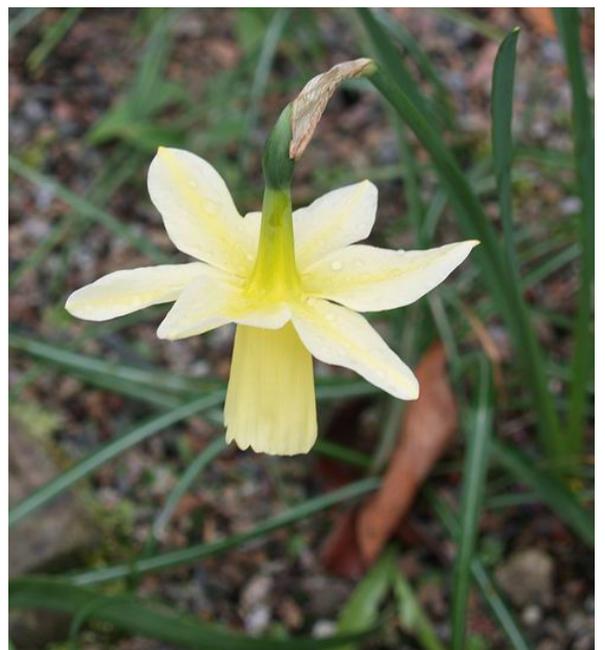


Tulips and Ipheion

I am very pleased with the way that the tulips are looking in the narrow bed at the base of a south facing wall. They seem to be settling in so well that I think I will plant more outside this summer. I have a number of pots of tulips in the Frit house, (see bulb log 16) where they are also growing well but the stems are at least twice the height of those outside. I think the plan will be to plant most of them out and just keep a bulb or two under glass as an insurance against outside losses.



Narcissus abscissus



Narcissus nevadensis

Also growing well outside are these two Narcissus raised from SRGC seed many years ago and I think I have the correct names for them. Both are very elegant trumpet daffodils. As they do not seem to be dividing at any rate I am hoping for a good seed set to help me increase my stock.



Erythronium and Pond

Sadly the peak flowering of the Erythroniums is over for another year but there are still a number of late flowering forms and species with flowers on. Looking across the bed at the top of the garden where I have been letting the Erythroniums naturalise under the larger Rhododendrons I am hopeful of a better seed set than I had last year when the weather at flowering time was terrible resulting in virtually no seeds. It has not been that good every day this year but at least the temperature was moderately better and I am watching carefully for signs of the seed pods turning upright and fattening.



I do not think I have shown a picture of our pond on the bulb log before and why would I as it has not much to do with bulbs. Except; it is sometimes speculated that bulbous plants originated in water from ancestors such as Nymphaea – the water lily with its swollen roots.



Erythronium oregonum

Some forms of *Erythronium oregonum*, like this one, have very nice markings inside while others have virtually no markings, (see variations below). One of the main diagnostic features that help identify this species is the shape of the filaments which are flattened and widen towards the base – clearly seen in this picture.



Erythronium oregonum forms



Erythronium revolutum

Erythronium revolutum is closely related to *E. oregonum* and shares the same shape of filaments but it is generally pink in colour. This is an unusual form of *E. revolutum* in that it has pale yellow pollen instead of the normal golden yellow – this feature is passed on down the seed line.



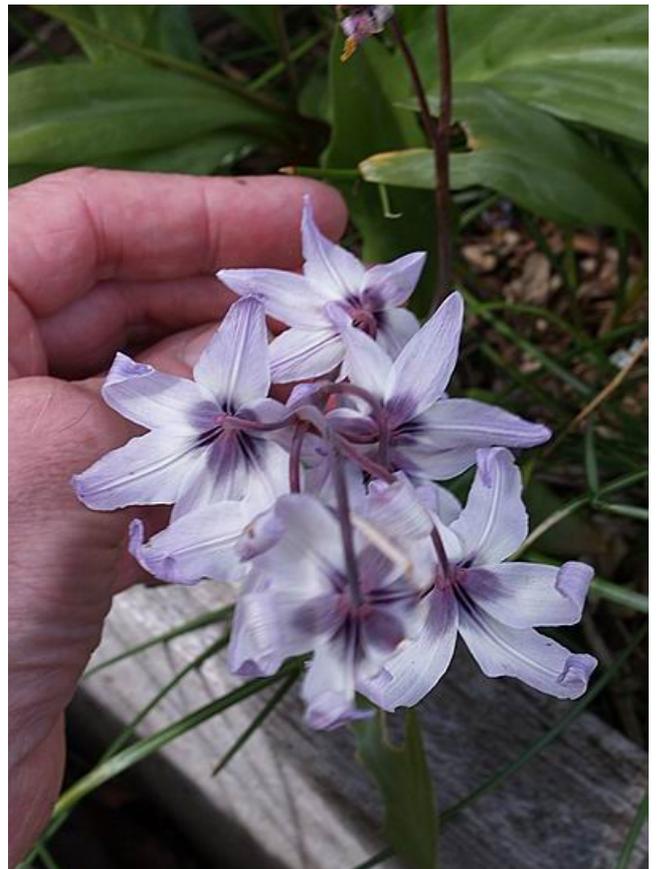
Erythronium hendersonii

I was attracted to this form of *Erythronium hendersonii* as it has seven flowers on a single stem – the most I have ever seen.

The growth looks quite normal so I do not think it is fasciated-where two stems combine to form one.

I will watch to see if this exceptional flowering recurs next year.

Raising plants from seed gives you these wonderful variations in form as well as providing you with plants that are likely to be more adapted to growing in your garden conditions.





Trillium grandiflorum seedlings

These *Trillium grandiflorum* seedlings show the colour variation that I was hoping for when I cross pollinated a white form with a pink form of this beautiful species. The full range is just about there from pure white to good pinks but none quite as strong a pink as the pollen parent *Trillium grandiflorum* roseum.



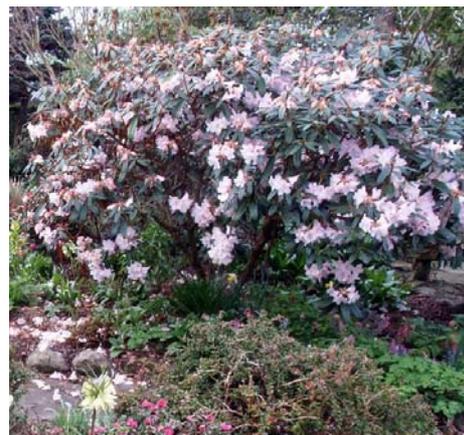
Trillium grandiflorum and Paris quadrifolia

Another joy of growing plants from seed is the number of plants that you get to experiment with and plant all over the place. I am continually surprised to find plants appearing where I don't remember planting them and often the best combinations are created not by intention but by accident.



Paris polyphylla

This Paris polyphylla is just off to the right of the above picture and all these plants are growing under a large plant of Rhododendron elegantulum.



Fritillaria pallidiflora

These Fritillaria pallidiflora were lifted and replanted when I dug out part of this bed and as a result they are growing stronger than ever.

This does show that, where it is possible, bulbs definitely benefit from being lifted and replanted into fresh or enriched soil every few years even if they are not forming a congested clump.

Fritillaria pallidiflora, like Fritillaria meleagris, is an excellent garden plant and I think it looks much better in the garden than in a pot.

**Fritillaria
pallidiflora**



Fritillaria pallidiflora flower

The handsome flowers of *Fritillaria pallidiflora* look very good but the best reward is when you tip the flower back, gently so as not to snap the stem, and look inside at the wonderful markings that there are. The extent of these deep maroon/red markings varies from plant to plant. Also notice the large drips of liquid nectar hanging on the nectaries – it is deliciously sweet to attract potential pollinators.



Fritillaria sibirnyi

On the left is one of the original colour forms that I had of *Fritillaria sibirnyi*. On the right is a new seedling flowering for the first time raised from seed collected from the plant on the left. Again this shows the range of variation that can be had when you raise your bulbs from seed.



Fritillaria glauca

For a number of years *Fritillaria glauca* has appeared on several bulb sellers lists usually under the cultivar name of 'Goldilocks'.

I have never found this species that easy as it seems very susceptible to botrytis on the leaves which is not good in our cold wet springs. This is a seed raised bulb from wild collected seed and I hope that this one survivor, from five seeds, to reach maturity may just be the one that likes the conditions in Aberdeen. Interestingly there did not seem to be so many of these offered in the trade this year I wonder if it is still growing well in Holland or if they too are now struggling with this desirable species.

***Fritillaria affinis* yellow form**

I raised this yellow form of *Fritillaria affinis* many years ago from NARGS seed - it was collected in California and listed as *F. pudica*.

I have built up substantial stocks of this plant on several occasions by removing the generous amounts of rice grains that are formed each year and growing them on separately from the parent bulbs. As is so often the case when I think I have a good stock of a particular bulb and without changing anything that I do it suddenly goes backwards for no apparent reason.

Luckily the rice grains worked as I am sure nature intended them to do and while I lost all the adult bulbs and most of the smaller ones a few rice grains survived to give me the chance to have another go at this beautiful form.

I also have this plant growing under a rhododendron in the garden. I discovered it in flower about two or three years ago and it must have grown from rice grains that I missed when I spread the old bulb potting compost onto the rhododendron beds.

There is yet another lesson to be learned here which is that plants often look after themselves better in the garden than we can look after them in pots under glass. I am slowly taking this valuable advice directly from the bulbs and this year I will plant out many more *Fritillaria* and other bulbs directly into the garden. I have been doing this on a small scale for a number of years mostly with good success.



Fritillaria recurva

It is much the same story with this other North American native; *Fritillaria recurva*. I build up a good number for a few years then the stock collapses.

I saw a number of stems of *Fritillaria recurva* in tight buds at the top of the path leading on to Lower Table Rock in Southern Oregon on my recent trip.

Unfortunately this was one of a number of pictures I lost when my picture software “threw a wobbly”.



Cyclamen repandum, Tropaeolum azureum and T. tricolor

I think this is a very pretty colour combination growing in the corner of the bulb house. Now most of the Narcissus and Crocus in this plunge have finished flowering I am happy to let the Tropaeolum species scramble as they wish. In actual fact both of these plants self seeded into the sand plunge a few years ago and I lifted them into pots.



Garden view with Corydalis flexuosa

This week I will finish off with a view in the garden showing the wonderful pure blue colour of Corydalis flexuosa at its best flowering beside a compact form of Rhododendron pseudochrysanthum (right) which is flowering as well as it has ever done in over twenty five years. The pink Rhodo to the left is an early flowering form of R. campylogynum.