



BULB LOG 50.....15th December 2010



Snow is thawing now



Celmisia armstrongii in snow

From the opening picture you can see that the snow has now almost gone now but the forecast is for it to return again on Thursday this week. To keep a garden full of interest all year round you need, a lot of bulbs☺, plus a good number of ‘structure’ plants- that is plants that have a full time presence like the Celmisia armstrongii above whose firm spiky leaves stood up and poked through the snow.



Celmisia in snow

Other Celmisias were flattened under the weight of the snow and are only now re-appearing - this may be Celmisia lyallii.



Celmisia spectabilis and others

This is a group of three species, one I know is *Celmisia spectabilis* but I have no idea what the other two are. All have been flattened under the snow but now the weight of the white stuff has been lifted they are most likely to rise up again unharmed by their experience. We are lucky that a lot of New Zealand plants take so well to growing in our garden conditions because many of them like the *Celmisias* provide excellent all year round foliage effect to give some structure to the bulb beds and other areas.



Bulb bed

Some of the other NZ plants we use in this way are the whip cord *Helichrysum intermedium* plus a number of the dwarf growing *Aciphylla* species which, even after the snow and with the bed still covered in the fallen leaves, provide some interest. You can also see the leaves of one of the many *Ramonda* plants we grow in this same bed – they too stay evergreen providing interest when the bulbs are not about.

Helichrysum and Aciphylla



Aciphylla similis and pinnatifida

I have always been fascinated by the Aciphylla especially the dwarf species that are more easy to accommodate in the garden – although I do have a number of the larger ones as well and I have grown them from seed for many years. After my visit out to New Zealand the other year when I saw many of them growing in their mountain homes my enthusiasm for them has been boosted and I would love to get hold of seed of some more especially *Aciphylla dobsonii* and *Aciphylla congesta*.



Corydalis flexuosa

The new leaves of *Corydalis flexuosa* are perfectly cold hardy and are also emerging unaffected by the snow cover except for the odd kinked stem. Another two *Celmisias* appear towards the bottom of this picture; one is a *Celmisia semicordata* seedling and the other a cutting of *Celmisia hectori*.



Leucojum vernum shoots

As the snow recedes I discover that the promise of spring is as always just around the corner as these shoots of *Leucojum vernum* await the lengthening daylight hours of the New Year before they progress on to the flowering stage.



Narcissus 'Cedric Morris'

I think I showed a picture of this clump of *Narcissus* 'Cedric Morris' a few bulb logs back just as it was appearing – it too has survived the snow with the exception of a kink or two which will not prevent it flowering.



Narcissus 'Cedric Morris'

Just to compare how the Narcissus 'Cedric Morris' that I keep in pots is progressing- this is a bit behind the ones that are outside. I find this all the time that the bulbs I grow in pots are nearly always behind those in the garden beds and the main reason for this is that those in the garden get an earlier and more consistent level of moisture.



Galanthus reginae olgae



Galanthus leaves

I really am risking my reputation by showing yet more snowdrops but they are among the bulbs in flower in the bulb houses just now. The lovely white flowers of *Galanthus reginae olgae* above are now upright again after the frost has lifted.

On the left is an early flowering form of *Galanthus elwesii* -I believe.

Those of you already struck down with 'White Fever' will be way ahead of me and have already noticed the tell tale evidence of the supervolute veneration of these emerging leaves. That is to say that the base of one leaf is wrapped around the base of the second leaf

As soon as the frost had lifted and the weather forecast was for a period of daytime plus temperatures I watered the bulbs. I described that they were just getting on the dry side before the recent big freeze hit us but I held off watering to minimize the risk of frost damaging the bulbs. Now I must act quickly because despite the fact that the water has been frozen for much of the time the pots always seem to come out of a period of frost drier than they were before the freeze.



As the outside water is turned off I had to revert to using the **watering can** and as always I apply water in proportion to the amount of leaf showing so pots with lots of leaves at an advanced growth stage get a good flooding. Provided the sand plunge has remained moist, the pots with no signs of growth get no water as they will have sufficient moisture to keep the roots ticking over.



Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus

Before I watered them, these stems of *Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus* could not support themselves and were flopping over, a sure sign that they were requiring water. A few hours after watering and they were nice and turgid again holding the flowers more or less upright. One effect of the cold period and the erratic water supply can be seen in the variable height of the flower stems – some being only half the height of others. I always think these plants look so much better flowering on short stems but this is difficult to achieve in our very low winter light level and short daylight hours. If you keep them a bit short of water they will have shorter stems but then you run the risk of the bulbs breaking down into masses of non-flowering sized bulbs which is the plant's natural response to dryness, especially at this stage of growth.





Now for just a few Narcissus seedling flowers to enjoy.





Tulipa agenensis seedlings

These seeds of *Tulipa agenensis* sown in January this year have waited until now to germinate. This suggests to me that like *Fritillaria*, Tulip seeds have a definite ‘time window’ during which they need to be sown to achieve germination – if you miss the time window they will remain dormant for another year. The detail shows there has been some frost damage to the tips of the seed leaf but as the new growth of bulb leaves come from the base that should not be too big a problem and hopefully they will survive.



Frozen island

Despite the thaw the pond still has a thick layer of ice except for around the edges and around this rock that appears like a miniature island. The pond is around a meter deep so I had to build a tower of bricks to sit the rock on. I have been fascinated over the years to observe the growth appearing on the rock. First some lichen – then some moss and now some grass and other seedlings are appearing – a miniature version of how given the right conditions plants will dominate the planet.