



BULB LOG 27.....7th July 2010



Front drive update

The *Geranium sanguineum* flowers are now coming out in the front drives and they will soon be a sea of pink and purple that will last all through the summer. I have shown two pictures to illustrate how much the light can change a picture. The one above was taken in a soft light on a day with high white cloud cover, this gives low contrast that the camera is well able to cope with. The one below was taken in bright sunshine which gives much stronger contrast that cameras sometimes struggle to cope with. On this occasion it works as the area of strong highlight is not very large and the foreground is in shade giving a good impression of the day.





Geranium sanguineum

The drives are at the North side of the house so it is always the flowers at the street end of the drive that open first as they receive the most hours of sunshine. As you can see every centimetre of space we have is planted up with plants from around the world. We also employ the 'time share' or 'high rise' garden principal where different groups of plants share the same area but flower and grow at different periods. As in the drive where the bulbs flower and complete their cycle in the early part of the year then as they are going dormant the Geranium takes over.



The larger blue corydalis take over this bed now as the Erythronium, Trillium and Corydalis solida that provided the spring colour are setting seed and going dormant. This type of planting is ideal as the plants that grow in the summer use up any surplus moisture so that the dormant bulbs are not at risk from sitting in ground that is too wet.



Corydalis mairei

The majority of the blue in this area is provided by *Corydalis mairei* which has increased both by clumping and self seeding. I also have *Corydalis elata* and some *flexuosa* hybrids growing there so I will have to watch closely for any evidence of other hybrids arising.



Corydalis capitata seeds

Many of these *Corydalis* shed their seeds dramatically as the two sides of the capsule suddenly recoil like a loaded spring hurling the contents out to the ground. To gather these seeds of *Corydalis capitata* I had to put a paper bag over the stems before running my hand up the ripe seed capsules. As I did this I could feel all the ripe pods popping and hear the sounds as the seeds fired into the sides of the bag.



Erythronium 'Craigton Cover Girl' seed pods

In my experience many of the Erythronium hybrids are fertile and in favourable conditions will produce some seed but I have never found a hybrid seed capsule that is stuffed full of seeds like you will find on a species.



Erythronium 'Craigton Cover Girl' seed pods

I only got 68 seeds from these 25 Erythronium 'Craigton Cover Girl' seed pods giving an average of less than three good seeds per capsule. The majority of second generation hybrid Erythroniums that I have raised have all been remarkably similar to the parent so I would expect these seeds to produce plants that are almost indistinguishable from 'Craigton Cover Girl' but there is always the chance that pollen may have come from another species and a new hybrid could result.



Erythronium oregonum seeds

If you compare the meagre harvest of seeds from the hybrids with those of a species like *Erythronium oregonum* where I got 75 seeds from one capsule you will see how much more fertile the species are.



Male and Female Arisaema flowers

Not all *Arisaema* flowers will produce seeds as many are either male with the anthers and pollen or female with the stigma and ovary. Sometimes mature plants will produce flowers with the male part above the female part. I do not know if this is confined to certain species or if it is to do with maturity and strength of growth.



Arisaema pollinators

When I peeled open this Arisaema flower it was full of wee flies but frustratingly I could not get a picture of them as they flew off every time I opened a flower. You can see one on the topmost right hand ovary of this picture.

However most flowers also had a number of dead flies lying in the bottom as you can see in this picture.

I now have to wonder if they just died naturally or were they trapped or poisoned in some way by the flower?



Roscoeae humeana



Roscoea humeana

Roscoea humeana is one of my favourite species and it is always into July before it appears.

I would say that it is on the early side this year and I suspect that is because I gave this bed a good watering two weeks ago and the plants have responded.

We have had the driest first six months for almost 50 years so a lot of plants, mostly the shrubs, are under stress and need watering.



Roscoea humeana

Roscoea humeana comes in all shades from very dark violet through the pale hues like the one above to perhaps the most beautiful of the entire genus the pure white see below.



Roscoea humeana alba



***Roscoea* 'KewBeauty'**

There is also a yellow form of *Roscoea humeana* and then there is the plant above, *Roscoea* 'Kew Beauty' which is thought to be of hybrid origin. This picture and the one below is of plants that I raised from seed collected from our plant we originally received as *Roscoea* 'Kew Beauty' – I can see no difference between the original form we have and these seedlings.



Roscoea 'Kew Beauty' seedling

The beautiful pale but strong yellow of this flower is fugitive and difficult to catch in pictures – in real life it looks to be a much stronger yellow than these pictures capture.

Mutisia oligidon hybrid

And now for something completely different.

I mentioned that we utilise every centimetre of space for plants and that includes the walls where we grow a number of climbers such as this South American climbing daisy.

Despite the occasional comments that I have heard or read stating that it is not hardy it has grown here for well over twenty five years and been through all our winters ; the coldest of which dipped down to -20C.

It is a regular feature of this plant to have flowers encased in ice and have icicles hanging from it as it will continue to flower until the worst of the frosts arrive.

It may not look much from this picture but it is just coming into flower and it is quite a spectacle when it gets going – and just look at the buds and flowers below.

Every second year or so I have to cut it hard back or else it could cover the whole house.





Mutisia oligidon hybrid – buds



Mutisia oligidon hybrid - flowers

The flower buds are deepest pink as are the newly opened flowers which then fade slightly in the light to a soft pink.

I opened this week's bulb log with a comparison showing the effect that different lighting can have on a photographic image and below is another example - this time the difference is the depth of field . The first was taken with a very small aperture, f22, giving maximum depth of field – that is most of the image is in sharp focus – while the second was taken with a wide open aperture leaving only a small area of the picture in sharp focus. It is especially important to choose the correct area that is sharply in focus for the softer image to work well

