



BULB LOG 22.....2nd June 2010



Crocus seed pods

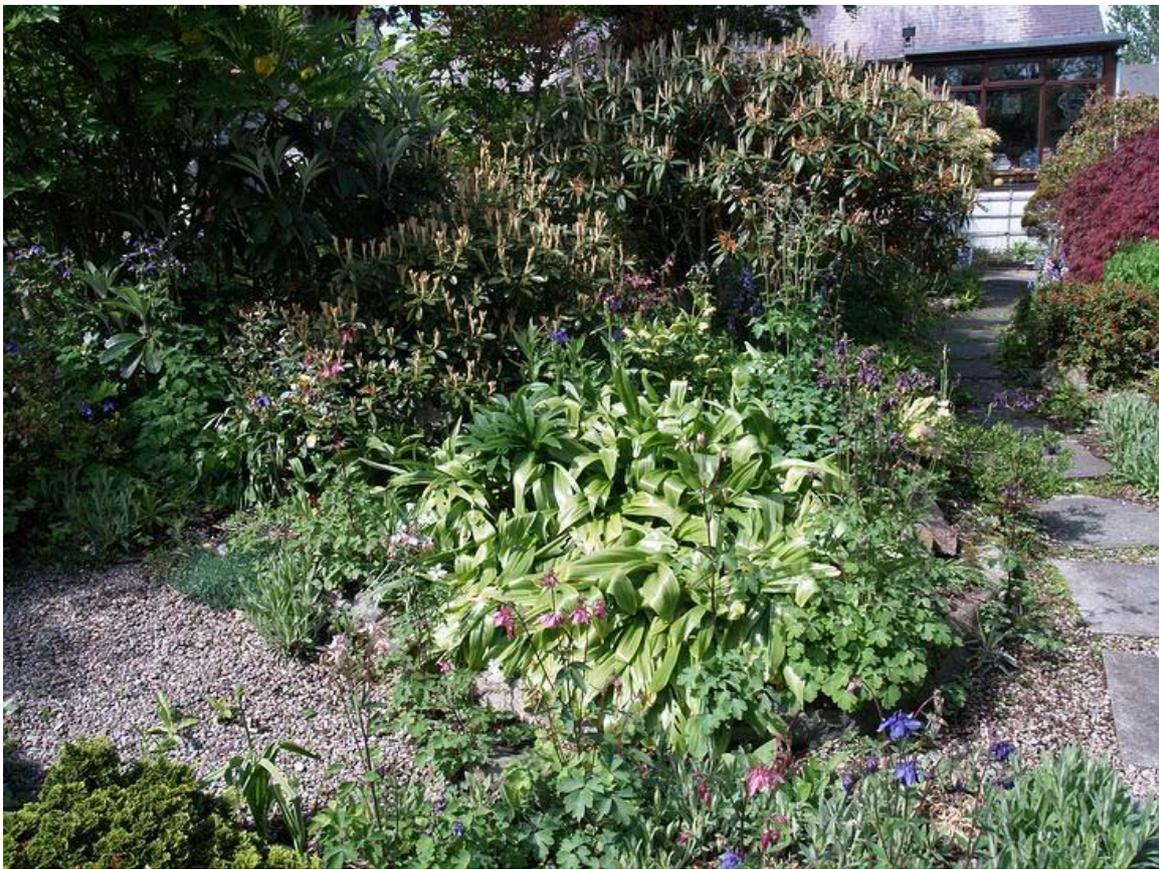
If you intend to collect the seeds from your garden plants it is important that you watch them very carefully as you will be amazed at how quickly the seed pod can develop from being green and tightly closed to opening and shedding its valuable contents.

I was happy to let this crocus growing in my experimental sand plunge shed its seeds as I want to find out which plants will naturalise and grow strongly in our climate without any protection.

I did help a bit by poking each of the seeds that I could see down into the sand with my finger - see pictures below- so they were not left lying exposed on the surface. In nature many of the crocus seeds would be taken under ground by ants and my experiments have proved beyond any doubt that sowing Crocus seeds at depth gives them a good advantage over those that are left on the surface.



Crocus seeds



Garden view

People continually speak about the seasons being different from the normal – later, earlier, warmer, drier, etc – what I always ask them is can they tell me what a ‘normal season’ is? I do not think it exists. We can work out an average or a mean season but not a *normal* season because every year brings differing conditions. This year we had a very long cold winter and initially plants were slow to come into bloom then we had a warm period which resulted in an intense period with many plants flowering at the same time that in other years maybe only overlap briefly with one fading as the other opens its buds. Despite around five days of lovely warm temperatures, May has had colder than average temperatures meaning that after the wonderful displays of flowers early on we are now in a period where many of the plants that we expect to be in flower by now are only just showing signs of flowering.



Colchicum leaves

It is in times like these that we can appreciate the leaves of many plants and we realise just how important they are to the structure of our gardens.

Colchicums are so often derided ‘because they have big leaves’. Well as long as you know that you can take advantage of these magnificent shiny green leaves and the fat seed pods by planting them where they will blend and not compete with other plants. They will reward you and the insects with a

magnificent display of flowers in August and September when there may not be so many flowers around.



Garden view

As much as I love bulbs I know that a planting of nothing but bulbs would just become a collection of bulbs and not a garden. We have created our garden to be like a small 'landscape' with all the elements that you would find in nature – trees to provide the canopy above our heads; larger shrubs to create barriers and give space and shape to the garden; low growing shrubs provide ground cover and year round structure while the bulbs and other herbaceous plants provide the seasonal highlights. Tree peonies are among the larger shrubs we have and you can see one on the right above.



Paeonia lutea ludlowii

Paeonia lutea is a wonderful plant that produces large yellow flowers in profusion in our garden. This is the subspecies *ludlowii* and it grows around 2 to 3m high, making quite an impact.



Paeonia delavayi

Paeonia delavayi is another tree paeony that has smaller flowers and is not so showy as *P. lutea* but I love the deep blood red colour.

It grows to a height of around 1.5m. The flowers have a spicy scent.

Paeonia emodii

Paeonia emodii is an herbaceous plant with the most amazing large pure white flowers with a sweet scent.

It comes from the Himalaya and so enjoys our cool moist garden conditions. While the clump gets bigger every year it has never set any seeds for us.





Rhododendron decorum

Rhododendron decorum is one of the larger types that we grow and it provides valuable structure in the garden helping to create the sense of being in a landscape and not on a garden where you are the tallest being, looking down at all the plants. I grew many of our rhodos, including this one, from seed so we have that subtle variation in the few specimens that we kept.

Rhododendron fortunei

Rhododendron fortunei is another of my seed raised rhodos.

Like R. decorum it has a fabulous scent that fills our garden especially in the early morning and the evening.





Trillium grandiflorum double

A number of trilliums are still hanging on to their flowers such as the double forms of *Trillium grandiflorum*. Many double flowers do not have the complete complement of style and stamens and so are not fertile. The prime task of flowers is to attract pollinators to fertilise the plants and as these flowers cannot be fertilised they often keep going for longer than their fertilised siblings in the hope of fulfilling their task.



Trillium grandiflorum

Above is one of my pink flush seedlings and as with many of the *Trilliums* the pink colour becomes ever more intense as the flower ages. I find this one attractive because it has retained a white zone in the centre providing a lovely contrast with the darkening petals.



Podophyllum hexandrum

Another group of valuable garden plants are the Podophyllum which are just coming into growth now.

The white flowers of Podophyllum hexandrum open from pink buds and sometimes this pink can be retained giving pink blossoms.

In the autumn the large red fruits develop providing yet more interest.





Podophyllum hexandrum

Even when they are not flowering the leaves of *Podophyllum hexandrum* are very attractive.



Podophyllum delavayi

There are a number of other species with attractive leaves including *Podophyllum delavayi*. This species holds its deep blood red flowers below the leaves – you can just see the flower bud rising from the base of the leaf stems.



Podophyllum 'Spotty Dotty'

Podophyllum 'Spotty Dotty' is a cultivar with very dramatic leaves.



Arisaema sikokianum

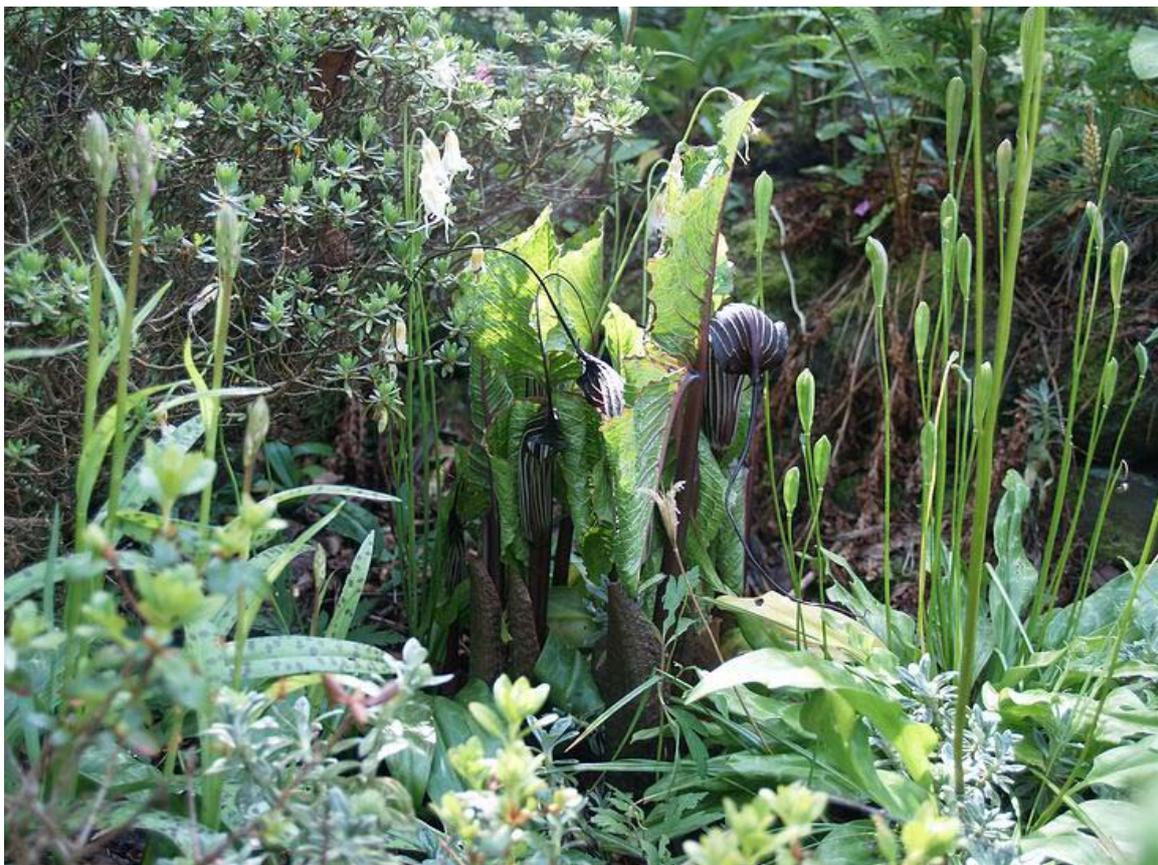
These Arisaema sikokianum do not seem to mind that a Meconopsis betonicifolia has self-seeded into their space and they are growing in perfect harmony.



**Arisaema
sikokianum**

Their amazing striped flowers with the pure white spadix appear to be made of porcelain.

Below you can see a large clump of Arisaema wilsonii is just emerging.



Arisaema wilsonii



Arisaema sp.

One of the many *Arisaema* sp. that I have grown from seed and have yet to identify shows the variation in seedlings. The trouble is I have the book but I need to find the time when the plants are in flower to identify them - I tend to have the time to read the books in the winter months when the plants are dormant.



Arisaema sp. seedlings

If anyone can help me to identify this beautiful small *Arisaema* I would, as always, be most grateful for your help.



Arisaema kiushianum

I just got a tuber of *Arisaema kiushianum* in February. As we were in the midst of winter I planted it in a pot of leaf mould and kept it in a cold glasshouse where it was subjected to a lot of frosts and freezing. As it has survived the cold so far I decided to plant it out when I saw the first signs of the shoot emerging and now it seems to be happy enough growing in a humus rich bed alongside the unknown species above.



Who could not like these wonderful flowers with their bizarre if not abstract form and patterns?