



BULB LOG 08.....22nd February 2011





Narcissus romieuxii rifanus

I have mentioned previously my reluctance to move the pots from the plunge just to photograph them. Capturing a good clear image is often still possible as you can see in the opening picture. The light level was extremely low and

with the shutter closed down to f22 to achieve maximum depth of field this required an exposure time of over one second. I used a tripod and set the camera shutter delay to 12 seconds to prevent camera shake – a sheet of grey paper provides a neutral background.



I find the upward facing flowers and the exerted style and stamens of *Narcissus romieuxii rifanus* make for an irresistible combination.

Also the fact that the style and stamens stick out so far makes it very easy to cross pollinate this form without the need for a paint brush.



Narcissus hedraeanthus

Narcissus hedraeanthus is the smallest species of the genus with tiny flowers on stout stems. It seems ironic to me that such a small species should have such robust short stems while many of the other species flowering just now have long floppy stems that are unable to hold the flowers upright. Using Narcissus hedraeanthus as a hybrid parent may result in the offspring being able to hold their flowers up on shorter rigid stems. My intentions are to fertilise my Narcissus hedraeanthus to get true seed and at the same time use its pollen on to some of the bulbocodium section with weak stems to see what will result.



Narcissus species, Morocco

We have only recently received this lovely Narcissus species from the Archibalds- it was originally from Morocco.

It has relatively small flowers of purest white and pale cream anthers, the filaments and style are also pure white which, according to some writings would suggest a form of *N. cantabricus*.

The stems are almost certainly taller than they should be due to a combination of our low light and the cramped conditions that we grow it in.

There are two more pictures below and I would be interested to hear any opinions as to the identity of this charming species.



Narcissus species, Morocco



Narcissus cantabricus var petunioides

I also received a few bulbs of *Narcissus cantabricus* var *petunioides* from the Archibald's 2010 list. The list states they were raised from selfed seed of the original clone described by Fernandes from material collected by John Blanchard's father – what a pedigree. The seedlings were rogued by the Archibalds to exclude all but the pure white flat round faced forms like this.



Narcissus cantabricus var petunioides

We used to grow this beautiful Narcissus but lost it some years ago and I am delighted to be given a second chance and have this lovely variety again .

After showing some of my losses and further potential damage in last week's bulb log I have received a number of very kind offers to help replace the bulbs I may lose. To me this typifies the plant community and I thank you all for your support and generosity.

I should have mentioned what I will do with the pots of mainly Sternbergia and Narcissus with yellowing tips to the leaves. I will not water them again until I am sure that there is still root activity as surplus water can quickly lead to wet rot and total loss of the bulb. If it is just the roots that have been killed by the frost the bulb may well survive and continue to support the leaves and flowers stems complete with buds. If the flower stems and or leaves continue to grow in length that would indicate that there is still some root activity and I will watch that the pot does not dry out completely. However if the flower stems stay very short and the flowers fail to open completely

that will indicate to me that they are just being supported by the store of food in the bulb and it will harm them to add any additional water before dormancy and they should be dried out - tipping the gravel top dressing will help the compost dry out more quickly. I also give a gentle tug to the yellow tipped leaves and if they stay firmly attached that is a good sign if the leaf comes away in my hand and show signs of rot at the base then I would tip the pot out to see what state the bulb is in. If there are no roots but the bulb and particularly its base look firm then cleaning up and drying the bulbs out to an early dormancy is the best procedure.



Narcissus 'Craigton Gem'

It is often very difficult to capture the true, often delicate, colour of these hoop petticoat narcissus and even a slight shift in the light conditions can make a huge difference. Sun light is warm and cloud cold, changing how the flowers will appear in a photograph. The human eye and brain work in tandem to adjust how we see colours to take into account the colour of the light source but even then we often find it difficult to describe or indeed agree on the actual colour we think we see. We do not see objects- we see the light reflected off their surfaces and if you do not believe that turn the lights off in a blacked out room and tell me what you see. It is great that now with digital cameras it is so easy to change the white balance (WB). The picture on the right is taken with the cloudy WB setting and the other is using my custom setting. So which one best illustrates what I think I see? Neither picture make it exactly- I say it would be a blend between the two.



Narcissus romieuxii 'Atlas Gold'

We really owe a lot to the late Jim Archibald's collection JCA 805 of *Narcissus romieuxii*: it has given rise to so many excellent forms and resulting hybrids of this fine winter flowering *Narcissus*. *Narcissus* 'Atlas Gold' is a first rate selection made by Bob Potterton which has deep relatively yellow flowers as well as that other essential attribute to be a successful cultivar - it increases well.



Narcissus hybrid

I did manage to lift this rather scruffy pot of a *Narcissus* hybrids out of the plunge to get a picture but the drawn and floppy stems do not make for a classic shot. A much better representation of this fine plant can be seen in the reports from the Early Bulb Day at Dunblane on the SRGC Forum which shows Roma Fiddes's compact plant.



Narcissus hybrid

This detail shows the deep yellow flowers of this hybrid that was one of the many made by the late Don Stead. It should not be confused with the other hybrid he made and passed around which I named and registered as Narcissus 'Don Stead' that can be seen in the picture below. I have been keen to name one of his other hybrids after his late wife Joan Stead but the one I was originally thinking of with a deeply lobed corona is not proving to be a great increaser so perhaps this yellow one should be the one. We must consult with their daughter Alison.



Narcissus 'Don Stead'



Narcissus asturiensis



This pot of *Narcissus asturiensis* was originally raised from seed from the Picos de Europa but I wonder if some of the subsequent generations have been a bit promiscuous?

Look at the swept back petals most noticeable on the clone to the right.

I am not clear if this swept back petal does feature in the descriptions of *N. asturiensis* in any wild populations or does this indicate that pollen from a *Narcissus cyclamineus* has visited?



***Iris reticulata* 'Blue Note'**

We had a great day out at the Early Bulb Day in Dunblane last Saturday: a hall full of enthusiastic gardeners all getting together for the first time since the winter sharing our grumbles about the weather and indulging in some retail therapy by buying lots of plants. My preferred method of getting plants is to raise them from seed but with named cultivars that is not possible so I sometimes have to make exceptions. I was so taken by the next two selections of *Iris reticulata* that I just had to have them. The lovely combination of colours and the poise of *Iris reticulata* 'Blue Note' make a stunning display.



***Iris reticulata* 'White Caucasus'**

The first pure white reticulate Iris that I know of has now entered the trade. Alan McMurtrie of Canada has been successful in selecting this stunning plant which has been bulked up.

As a matter of routine I put all bulbs that I bring in like this into a quarantine situation to check their health out before I fully integrate them into the garden.



Iris reticulata 'White Caucasus'



Dactylorhiza tubers

I found these Dactylorhiza tubers that I had left covered in leafmould in a shallow tray since I split some clumps up last autumn. Despite this ill-advised treatment they are all in good condition. I have now planted them and I wanted to show that it does not matter which way up you plant them or any bulb: the stem will always turn upwards.



Erythronium seed

I purposely did not cover these seeds with grit so that I could observe the germination process more clearly. This week these *Erythronium elegans* seeds have started to germinate by sending out a growth that will push down into the compost and at the end of which the young bulb will form.



Erythronium seed

These seedlings are in the next stage of germination – they will have sent down their root and are now sending up their first seed leaves. I have noticed the slug damage and will sort that out.