



BULB LOG 51.....19th December 2012



The bulb bed is now at its least interesting period of the year with just some green provided by *Celmisia*, *Cyclamen*, *Erodium* and *Hebe* leaves plus some *Primula* stems with seed pods – but the tips of spring promise are showing in the form of some *Leucojum* shoots (below).





Corydalis flexuosa leaves

After flowering through the spring and well into summer the leaves of *Corydalis flexuosa* then die off only to be replaced by a new set in late autumn – these will stay all through the winter. Here they look resplendent and almost silver as a result of the masses of tiny water droplets covering their surface.



Due to being planted quite late in the season the plants in the refurbished end of one of the raised beds have not grown much yet but they have settled well into the habitat of broken concrete blocks that I landscaped to blend into the existing pink granite.



Eriogonum ovalifolium eximium

Here a close up shows *Eriogonum ovalifolium eximium* it will be interesting to see how well it and the others come through the winter.



This is one of the first troughs that I landscaped using broken concrete blocks. The plants are all established well now including a number of *Androsace* that I just scattered as seed over the trough. I suspect that I will have to remove some of the moss before it covers the entire surface of the rocks.



Here another planted up with mainly Himalayan Androsaces which have now 'shut down' for winter.



Androsace delavayi ACE1786

The outer leaves of *Androsace delavayi* go brown and wrap around to protect the green centre of the rosette. My concern is that damage by excessive winter moisture could cause rot to set in so I may have to consider placing a small cover over the plant or the whole trough. For now I am hoping that the acute drainage provided by the rocky environment will help the plant cope and I will keep a regular watch.



Androsace tapete

Androsace tapete forms more of a cushion and here it is growing almost vertically further improving the drainage. The cushion remains quite tight, growing in just concrete and sharp sand, so I hope it too will survive – whether I can flower this plant that is notorious for not blooming well in cultivation is the challenge



One fresh *Sternbergia lutea* flower is set off by another as it slowly goes over. The flowering period of many of the autumn bulbs has been very drawn out as they have to endure the cold damp dark conditions of our climate.



Galanthus peshmenii

One of the other effects of the lack of autumn sunshine is the sporadic nature of the flowering – with some flowering stems appearing a month after the first opened. Despite the fact that I am transferring the pollen to the stigma there is little chance of any fertilisation as these cool low light conditions are simply not conducive to allow the pollen to grow down to the ovary.



Galanthus peshmenii



Galanthus reginae olgae



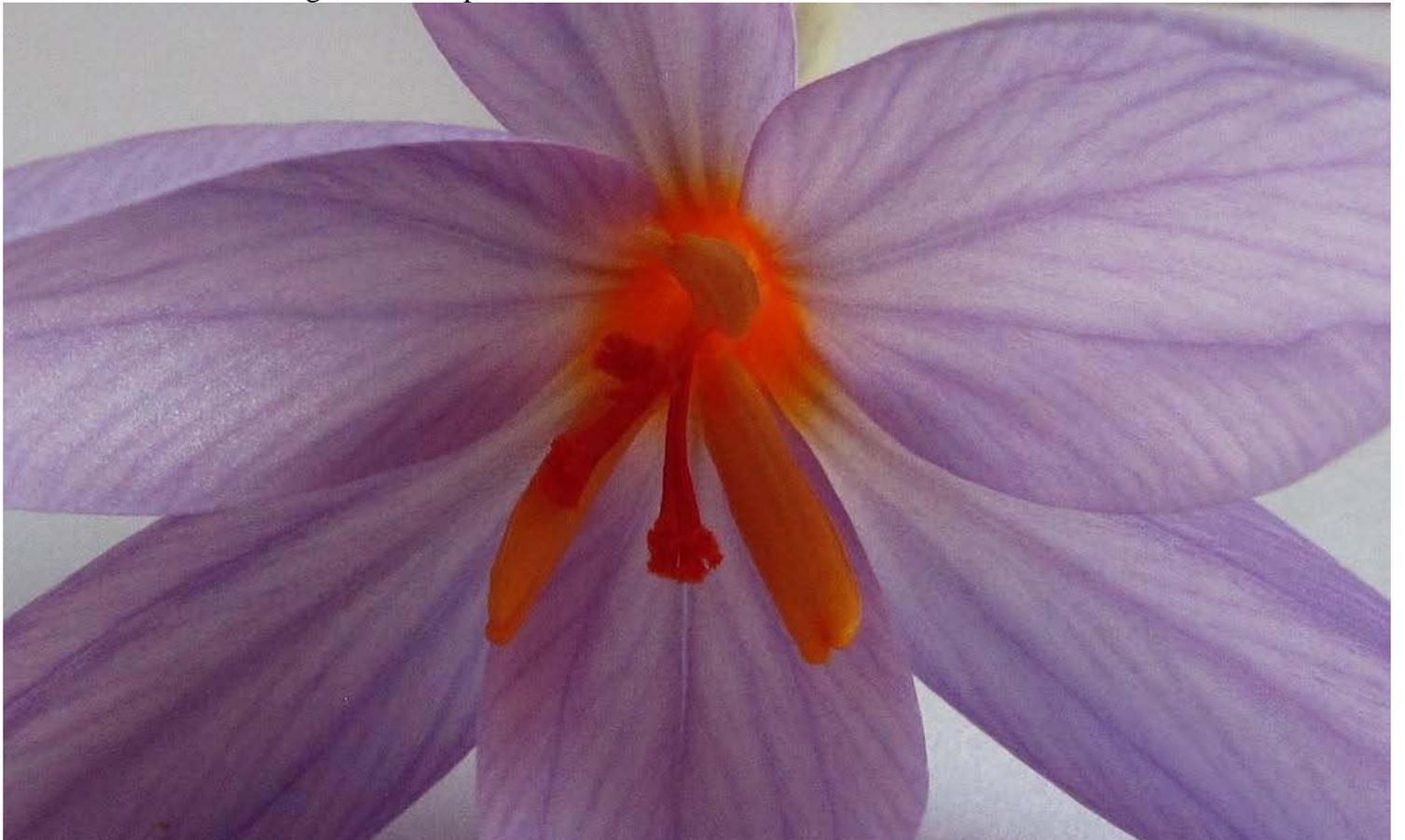
Bulb house



It the same story with the autumn flowering *Crocus kotschyanus* – most years these **Crocus kotschyanus** flowers would be long past opening their flowers on the sunny days and closing them again at nights until they are fertilised or simply worn out. Not this year - these flowers have been closed like this since they pushed through the ground – there has been insufficient heat and light to encourage them to open. Now the flowers are showing signs of withering as they give up the fight for this year. Apart from losing a year's potential seed crop the fact that the flowers have not opened will not affect the long term growth of the corms



Crocus longiflorus has also been affected the same way. I did decide to pick some flowers and take them into the warmth of the kitchen to get them to open



Crocus longiflorus



Crocus longiflorus* and *Crocus kotschyanus

The majority of *Crocus* species have photo reactive flowers – that is they open in warmth and strong light then close up to protect the reproductive parts in cold and dark conditions. Different species react to differing levels of light and temperature: above the flower of *C. longiflorus* opens while that of *C. kotschyanus* remains closed under exactly the same conditions.



Crocus laevigatus



Crocus laevigatus

Most Crocus species have evolved to flower in a set season – autumn or spring – however in our garden Crocus laevigatus flowers can appear any time from autumn through the winter and into early spring. Seed raised plants will display a range of variation in their flowers –I show just a few above – notice they all have yellow throats plus the individual on the left also has yellow tips to the floral segments.



Crocus laevigatus flowers photo react at much lower light and temperature levels than most other species we grow – perhaps this is an adaptation to flowering through the cooler winter months



Crocus laevigatus

After only a short period in the warmth of the kitchen these *Crocus laevigatus* flowers not only opened but reflexed almost through 180 degrees – in the same conditions the *Crocus kotschyanus* flowers had not even opened.



Crocus laevigatus

What I cannot share with you is the wonderful honey like scent that this species emits.....