



BULB LOG 07.....15th February 2012



Snow drops

The bulbs under glass keep our interest and bring us pleasure all through the winter but now the emphasis will start to switch to the bulbs in the garden. It is the snowdrops whose flowers are popping up everywhere and on favourable days they even manage to raise their petals.



Sand Bed

Recently someone asked for more information on my sand beds so I checked back to find the construction pictures and was surprised to find that I made this one way back in 2007 – it really does not feel like it was that long ago. It is establishing very nicely and the bulbs do extremely well growing in just pure sharp sand. From the start I have been

scattering seeds of Crocus, Cyclamen, Fritillaria, Narcissus etc, and many of these are now flowering and self seeding into the sand.



Spurred on by the success of that first sand bed I converted this small area last year and planted out a number of bulbs and offsets when I was re-potting the bulbs in the bulb house. I hate seeing labels in our garden and those that you see here are only temporary markers to show where I planted bulbs so that I would not damage them when digging a hole to plant others- the labels will all disappear this year. It will be interesting to see how it develops through the years.



Fritillaria montana

Fritillaria montana is one of a number of frits that I planted here. Ideally I would love to grow all our bulbs this way and have had plans for a few years to build raised beds inside the glasshouses that would be filled with sand - I would then grow the bulbs directly in the sand. There are problems associated with this plan and the main one is

keeping a record of the bulbs when they are all growing loose in the sand - they could easily get mixed. If I can get some help to do the heavy work I may convert one of the bulb houses this year and my solution to the problem of mixing up the bulbs is - I do not care. I have grown bulbs for many years keeping them in pots all labelled and now I would like to just enjoy the same sort of mixed plantings that I have been employing around the garden with the bulbs that require that bit of protection from the glasshouse.



Eranthis hyemalis

The standard *Eranthis hyemalis* is self seeding around in the bed beside the sand bed and each year I lift some of the more mature seedlings and plant them in other beds to spread their joy around the garden.



Eranthis 'Schwefelglanz' and 'Pauline'

I have these two named forms *Eranthis* 'Schwefelglanz' and *E.* 'Pauline' both are paler yellow than the commonly cultivated form but I cannot see much difference between the two of them. They are now established enough to be



planted directly into the garden where I will watch them carefully to see if they do differ in any substantial way.

**Eranthis
'Schwefelglanz'
seedlings**

It will also be very interesting to see how much, if any, variation will result from this pot of seedlings – but I will have to wait around three more years for them to reach flowering

size. It would be good to get some variation in colour in my plantings and anything from orange through shades of yellow to white would be possible – and desirable.



Eranthis 'Grunling'

A few years ago I was given this form, E. 'Grunling' but it is not to my taste. I love variation in colours but I also like pure colours and this form with its mutated floral segments that cannot decide if they should be green or yellow just does not appeal to me. Luckily we are all different and plenty of people seem to enjoy the weird forms that can be found in many plants. Having grown it for a few years in a pot to assess it I can say that it will not find a permanent home in the garden.



Eranthis pinnatifida

In complete contrast the beautiful pure colours of *Eranthis pinnatifida* that blend so well together is at the opposite end of the scale- I love it and could never have enough of this charmer.

Last year's seeds, sown immediately they were ripe in May, are just starting to germinate and are the best way to increase stock of this plant. Notice that unlike the twin seed leaves of *E. hyemalis* these seedlings have only a single leaf. I started many years ago with a tiny tuber smaller than the average pea. Gradually it grew and after about three years I got the first flower – it was another few years before I encouraged it to set seed.



I now have a number of seed pots at different stages the oldest of which might produce a flower next year and I cannot wait to see if I get any variation. I have seen a number of enviable forms via the Forum from China and Japan and on great websites along with some other similar species, *Eranthis stellata*, *E. albiflora*, *E. siberica* and *E. byunsanensis*. I would love to grow them all and maybe one day I will find a source of seed or plants.



Crocus sieberi atticus

In the garden a clump of *Crocus sieberi atticus* has reached its optimum size and I intend to split it up later in the year – probably just as the leaves start to die back and I can still locate it easily.



Crocus tommasinianus

I much prefer to see my bulbs spaced out like this so that you can enjoy the individual blooms without them being crammed together as they are in the clump of *C. atticus* shown above. This takes time and effort but in my view it looks so much better and of course the bulbs grow and form clumps quicker without the close competition and so you have to lift and split them on a regular cycle to maintain this look.



Crocus angustifolius

The stunning markings on the back of this seed raised *Crocus angustifolius* are a glorious manifestation of nature as the ultimate artist.



Some of my *Fritillaria chitralensis* are now showing their flowers



Narcissus in bulb house

It is still the Narcissus flowers that are the most numerous in the bulb house and I cannot resist sharing a few more with you.



Narcissus bulbocodium

We have a number of pots of seed raised *Narcissus bulbocodium*. Each pot displays some variation within itself as well as variation between the different pots. There are a few 'stand-out' forms that have a different shape to the corona and one that has a much larger flower than the rest. The big feature which I like about all these seedlings is that they have robust stems that stay relatively short and

so the flowers do not flop about like some of the other hoop petticoat narcissus do in our poor winter light.



Narcissus bulbocodium ex Morocco



I got the seed of this potful as **Narcissus romieuxii rifanus** but I am not sure it fits the description. On the other hand it did originate in the Rif mountains of North Africa and the naming of these species/forms is very muddled as far as I can tell. I have another pot under that name where the flowers remain looking upwards and that seems to fit better with the descriptions that I have read.



Narcissus romieuxii rifanus

This side view shows how the corona always rolls backwards as the flower ages – this is consistent through all the seedlings in this pot.



No one has even tried to put a species name to this glorious form as far as I know - it came to me from Jim and Jenny Archibald as ***Narcissus sp ex Morocco***. It is a wee beauty with unusually pale anthers that along with the style protrude well beyond the pure white corona.



Narcissus sp ex Morocco

It makes you wonder what is in a name?

To taxonomists names are about classifying all the plants on this earth trying to put an order on how they are related to one another. Since the earliest days when Linnaeus laid down the foundations of modern day botany we have relied on morphology - the physical characteristics of the plants to identify and classify them - and that has served science very well. In more recent times DNA and plant genetics are sometimes used – when the funding can be justified – and that will help throw light on the family trees of the plants.

When a plant enters cultivation we find another naming system is used or tagged on to the scientific names and that is the use of cultivar names. Anyone can name a plant – there are no laws that you have to follow but if the names are to mean anything then there are rules that are internationally recognised that should be adhered to. Some plants, such as Narcissus, have an international register that attempts to record all the names and prevent multiple forms being given the same name or multiple names being applied to the same plant. The main need for cultivar names is when a gardener asks for a plant by name they get what they are expecting.

I believe that the time to name a special plant that you have raised is when you start to distribute it - I have named a number of plants over the years. Apart from the very first few, all the plants I raised and went on to name start with 'Craigton' - used like a stable name it immediately identifies where those plants originated from.

If you wish to name a plant in honour or memory of someone then I would say the first thing you should do is make sure that you trial the plant for a number of years to make sure that it is a good grower and will survive the test of time. Once the plant has proved itself worthy of a special name it is a courtesy to check with the person you are naming it for or clear it with their family before you apply the name. If there is a Register then you will have to convince them it is distinct enough to deserves a name before they register it as official. I named both the Narcissus below and both are fully registered cultivars. Narcissus 'Don Stead' was raised by the man himself and went around as Don Stead's hybrid but as he had raised a number of hybrids it was becoming confusing and this one was so exceptional that I thought it deserved a cultivar name and asked this daughter Alison's permission to name it in his memory. It is a hybrid between *Narcissus cantabricus* and *N. bulbocodium*.



Narcissus 'Don Stead'



Naricssus 'Craigton Gem'