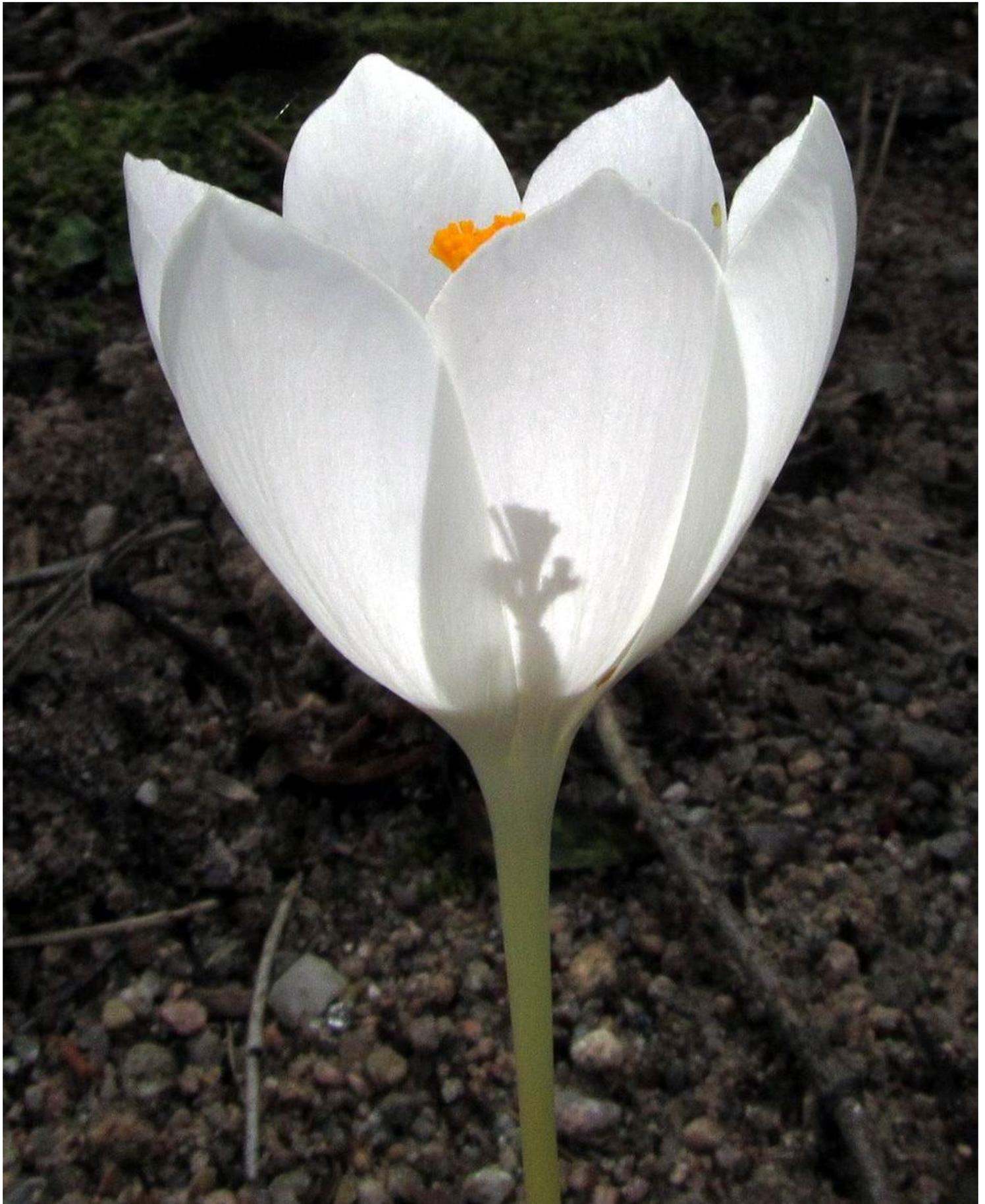




BULB LOG 39..... 26th September 2012



Crocus nudiflorus white seedling



The beautiful specimen shown is a selected seedling I raised from Crocus 'Orla' itself a white form of *Crocus nudiflorus*. While 'Orla' was the first white I had seen or grown, in my mind it was not perfect in that the flowers tended to have a slight pink/purple wash when they first open – the flowers then fade to white. While most of the seedlings I have raised from 'Orla' revert back to the type purple colour a small percentage have come white. This one opens pure white and to my eye it also has a more pleasing goblet shape with full overlapping floral segments.



Crocus 'Orla'

Unusually this one is in the frame where I grow 'Orla' and it has opened white this year without any signs of the pink flush. While there are plenty of shoots pushing through the ground this one flowering well ahead of the others and at this stage I am not sure if this is 'Orla' opening pure white or a self sown white seedling. I will get a better idea when the others open – it would be interesting to know if others find that 'Orla' opens with a pink tinge.



It is wonderful to have white forms to mix in and to contrast with the plantings of the purple forms.

Below is a picture of **Crocus nudiflorus** to remind you of the more commonly seen colour





Crocus banaticus



Crocus speciosus

On checking back through the Bulb Log I see that all the autumn flowering bulbs are currently running at least a week to ten days behind the average flowering time. Even though the delicate tubes are easily bent in the wind the flowers continue to open and you will find that if you pick the fallen ones they stay fresh and open for a few days even without having to be placed in a container of water – they do last longer in water.



More of the *Crocus speciosus* hybrids in the sand bed that I showed last week are now opening revealing the variation through the seedlings many with white pollen like the one below.





Others have yellow pollen and it is difficult to be sure if these have hybridised or are pure *Crocus speciosus xantholaimos*. Below: The *Crocus vallicola* that I took under glass have opened their flowers wide to reveal the variation in the markings and petal shape that you will get from seedlings.





I have finished working on the pots in the Fritillaria house and they are now ready for the first watering of the season. As with many other bulbs I am using more 7cm pots. It is amazing how many bulbs you can grow in these relatively small containers plus I can fit so many more into the confined space I have. I have also found that there are fewer instances of bulbs suffering from wet rots in these smaller pots – presumably this is due to the smaller volume of wet compost surrounding the bulbs and hence more air is also present.



Air pot

Some Fritillaria bulbs seem particularly prone to wet rots and in our cool wet conditions this has proved a problem - previously I showed a new method I was trying out to combat this. I called it the 'air-pot' method, which consisted of inserting a clay thumb pot, which I filled with gravel, into the centre of an 11cm plastic pot; this served both to reduce the volume of compost and increase the air around the bulbs and roots.



I have found this form of *Fritillaria kotschyanus* to be especially prone to bulb rots and in the 'air-pot' all the bulbs have grown well with no signs of the rot and the remains of healthy roots are clearly visible around the hole left when I removed the clay pot. I often notice that the bulbs around the outside of a pot are the least likely to suffer from rot and I believe that is due to the increased drainage and hence air down the sides. With the 'air-pot' method I have effectively added more 'sides' in the centre and I will use this method with any of the bulbs I find to be susceptible to this condition.



Muscari leaves

Three weeks on from the first watering of the other houses, leaves are appearing on number of bulbs and this is why, once you do water, it is essential not to let the compost dry out completely.



Narcissus leaves

At the beginning of October I will apply the second storm to these bulbs giving them a thorough soaking – flooding each pot as before. It is far better to flood the pots at regular intervals allowing them to almost dry out between soakings than it is to add a little water each day. The reason for this is the weight of water from a good flood draws in air as the forces of gravity drains water out the bottom of the pot keeping the compost well aerated. Air at the roots is as essential as moisture to keep plants healthy and if you add a little water each day the surface tension can prevent it draining away freely excluding air and the pot can quickly become waterlogged.



Ornithogalum leaves

After the first two storms I water each pot individually, depending on the amount of leaf growth showing, again I employ the flooding method. I cannot prescribe the exact interval between these soakings as it depends on your temperatures, compost, type of pot (clay or plastic), number of bulbs in a pot, state of growth etc. The basic rule is that if there are no signs of leaf growth then the pot just needs to retain low levels of moisture to keep the roots alive; when leaves are present or growing then they need more moisture to sustain them and support the growth.



I have been enjoying wonderful pictures of Sternbergia flowers on the [forum](#) how I wish we could flower them so well here in Aberdeen. I can grow most of them but we just do not get enough heat to ripen the flower buds as they go dormant in the late spring – time will tell if I get any flowers this year...



Allium beesianum

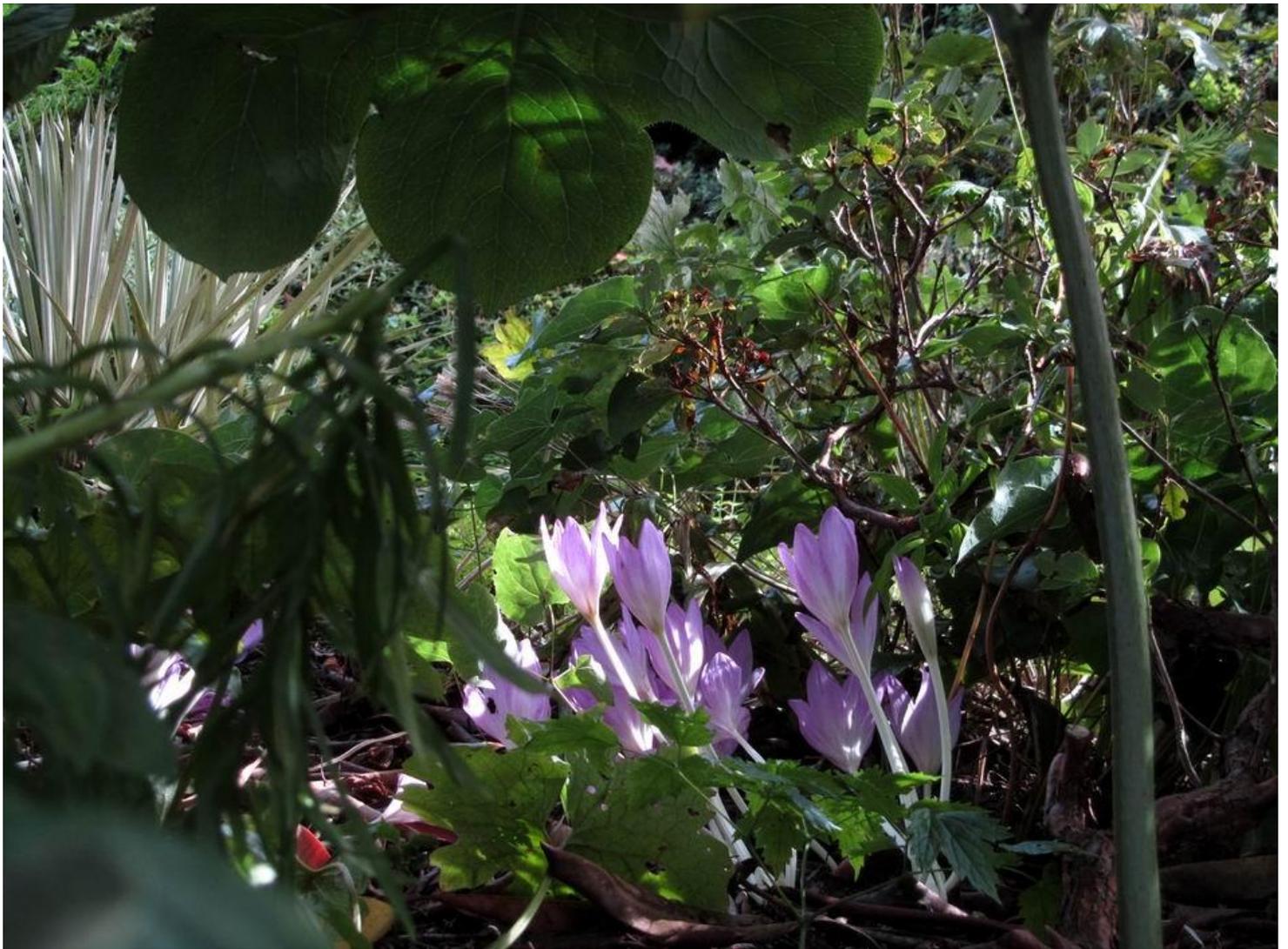
Out in the garden the wonderful blue of Allium beesianum draws your eye – I am relieved that we still have this plant since our main clump died out as a result of being overgrown by an expanding dwarf Rhododendron.



Colchicums are the main flowering feature in the garden just now with their magnificent flowers.



They are susceptible to keeling over as it is not a stem but the floral tube that holds them aloft but even when they topple they are still attractive.



Groups of flowers become obvious when the sun hits them highlighting them against the darker foliage of the surrounding plants.



I don't know how many will be left standing because as I write, on Tuesday morning, we are being battered by the most dreadful storm - lashing rain and gale force winds have already brought down branches on an Acer...