



BULB LOG 50..... 11<sup>th</sup> December 2013



A snowdrop in a pot featuring on the front page of the Bulb Log! Yes I do like them and especially when they flower as early as this one does - filling the bulb house with a wonderful scent. I will leave trying to give it a name to the true galanthophiles, for me it is just a nice 'drop.



A lot of foliage has grown up recently as you see above in the 'prop' house plunge filled with 7cms square plastic pots, there are two columns with 8cm pots. The small size of pot does not mean that I cannot have a lot of flowers – I have just counted over 50 buds coming in an 8cm pot of Narcissus 'Craigton Clumper' – I will count them again when the flowers are open as I think this is a record for me.

I always have to be checking the pots to see that they do not get too dry at this time of year especially when it is milder and sunny. Last week we had a brief freeze for a few days but now we are back into double figures, 10C, so all those leaves are using up moisture both for growing and through transpiration.

On the right is a good illustration of one of the ways I can tell if a pot needs watering or not. On a bright day when the humidity in the glasshouses is low I look at the gravel top dressing. I think you can tell from the picture on the right that the gravel on the left hand pot looks moist while the right hand one looks dry. This is an obvious case as the pot with the Crocus has no growth above ground to use up moisture while the pot of Narcissus, on the right, has lots of leaf growth pumping away the moisture.



Watering in the winter is essential if you want the bulbs to grow but you have to be selective and only water the pots that have obvious signs of growth. As our outside water is switched off just now I have to use a watering can - I flood the pots that indicate they are on the dry side and do not touch the others. The other factor that I take into account is the temperature, I would never water in freezing conditions - on top of which I check the long term



forecast to ensure that there are unlikely to be freezing conditions for at least a few days after watering.



It is exactly the same in the bulb house plunge where it is mostly 9 and 11 centimetre pots – each one is checked and watered individually as required.



The mild conditions are encouraging many more *Narcissus* flowers to start emerging. There are plenty of buds showing so obviously my feeding regime last season worked well along with the good warm conditions of the summer that helped ripen the flower buds.

These are the first flowers of ***Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus*** to open.



### ***Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus***

Like many of this type the buds start out as a pale yellowish colour but lighten as they open – these are never the pure white seen in *Narcissus cantabricus*.



**Narcissus 'Camoro'**

Narcissus 'Camoro' is a hybrid between *Narcissus romieuxii* and *Narcissus cantabricus monophyllus* and along with the previous plant is among the first to flower most years.



**Narcissus cantabricus monophyllus**



**Narcissus cantabricus monophyllus**

One of the diagnostic features of *Narcissus cantabricus monophyllus* is that it has a short pedicel – the individual flower stem that sits on top of the main stem, scape. Above are two different clones the one on the left has a smaller flower and a shorter pedicel but both share other key features such as the white conical flowers. The left hand one also exhibits a more pinched waist where the petals attach half way up the corona.

**Narcissus romieuxii**

The first *Narcissus romieuxii* flower of this season is also open now.

These last two species that I show are the parents of the hybrid *Narcissus* ‘Camoro’.

Unlike many *Narcissus* hybrids *N. ‘Camoro’* is fertile and that is I am sure one of the parents of the hybrid I have been showing these last few weeks.





I have positioned a Narcissus 'Camoro' flower below the larger more flared and frilly edged coronas of my hybrid to show the difference and why I selected this particular seedling to increase and eventually name.

**Narcissus hybrid 'CC' with a single flower of Narcissus 'Camoro' positioned below.**



Here I am holding the N. 'Camoro' flower beside N.'CC' to show the side view.



**Narcissus 'Camoro'    Narcissus hybrid 'CC'**



**Narcissus 'Camoro'    Narcissus hybrid 'CC'**

Provided they continue to grow and increase as well as they have been I have now decided that I will distribute some bulbs of this hybrid next year and the name I have selected is **Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister'**. I choose this name as the large flared, frilly edged corona reminds me of a chorister's neck ruff. I believe that with its good looks, delicate scent, early flowering habit and vigour in growth it will make a good addition the others that are available.



**Bulb house plunge**



**Bulb house plunge**

While Narcissus flowers are on the ascendancy Crocus laevigatus continues to bring us pleasure as a continuous progression of flowers open.



**Crocus laevigatus dark flowered forms**



**Crocus laevigatus**



The recent gales and freezing weather have brought down another lot of leaves so we have been leaf lifting again. In some areas such as under the bigger shrubs we are happy just to leave them to break down naturally but where we have under plantings of bulbous plants I like to lift the leaves to prevent them forming a blanket that can prevent seed germinating well. We use a number of tools as shown below including an electric 'leaf vac' that shreds the leaves as it lifts them - see left. As long as the leaves are dry this works well but the shredding mechanism continually clogs up if the leaves are too wet. A previous version we had of that machine did not shred and so would lift the wettest leaves.

There are advantages to the shredding version - less emptying of the bag and a quicker breakdown of larger leaves to a wonderful leaf mould.



**Leaf lifting tools.**



Once the leaves have been shredded they do not form a tough mat anymore so I sometimes lay them immediately as a mulch as shown above.



**Ipheion 'Alberto Castillo'**

The leaves of Ipheion 'Alberto Castillo' emerge early, surviving all winter until the flowers come in the spring.



As I lifted the fallen leaves from this well nibbled **Cyclamen hederifolium** I was aware of a group of self-sown seedlings nestled in the centre of the plant.



Three generations are represented here, the mature leaves, the seedling leaves and the seed capsules with this year's seed being drawn into the centre of the plant by their recoiling stems. To allow these seedling to flourish better I will have to transplant them at some future date.



The first snowdrop flowers this season in our garden .....