



BULB LOG 06..... 6th February 2013

Eranthis hyemalis



Since the retreat of the snow more and more flower buds of *Eranthis hyemalis* are appearing - curling up from their underground lair where they have been slowly forming in anticipation of a sunny spring.

This is my favourite plant from the early flowering plants in our garden for the simple reason that it is the only one that is optimistic enough for its flowers to face the sky, *Galanthus* and *Leucojum* choose to be cautious and hang their heads. We have had more snow days recently so they have not fully opened yet.





This yellow hellebore is four weeks later coming to this stage than it was last year – not a bad thing. Many of our plants are tempted out too early by our erratic winter with so many false springs only to get hit when the frosts return.



I showed some seed germinating last week but want to return to this **Fritillaria** seed to point out a valuable lesson we can learn. The seed growth always emerges from the pointed end of the seed no matter how it is orientated in the soil. I have shown how I sow these seeds a number of times in past [Bulb Logs](#) - scattering the seeds on the surface then agitating the surface to encourage the seeds to turn end on into the compost. Due to their form they mostly go in pointed end down and that is to the advantage of the emerging growth as it does not need to waste resources probing around until it goes under ground. When I only have a small number of seeds I carefully place them on their edge, pointed end down.



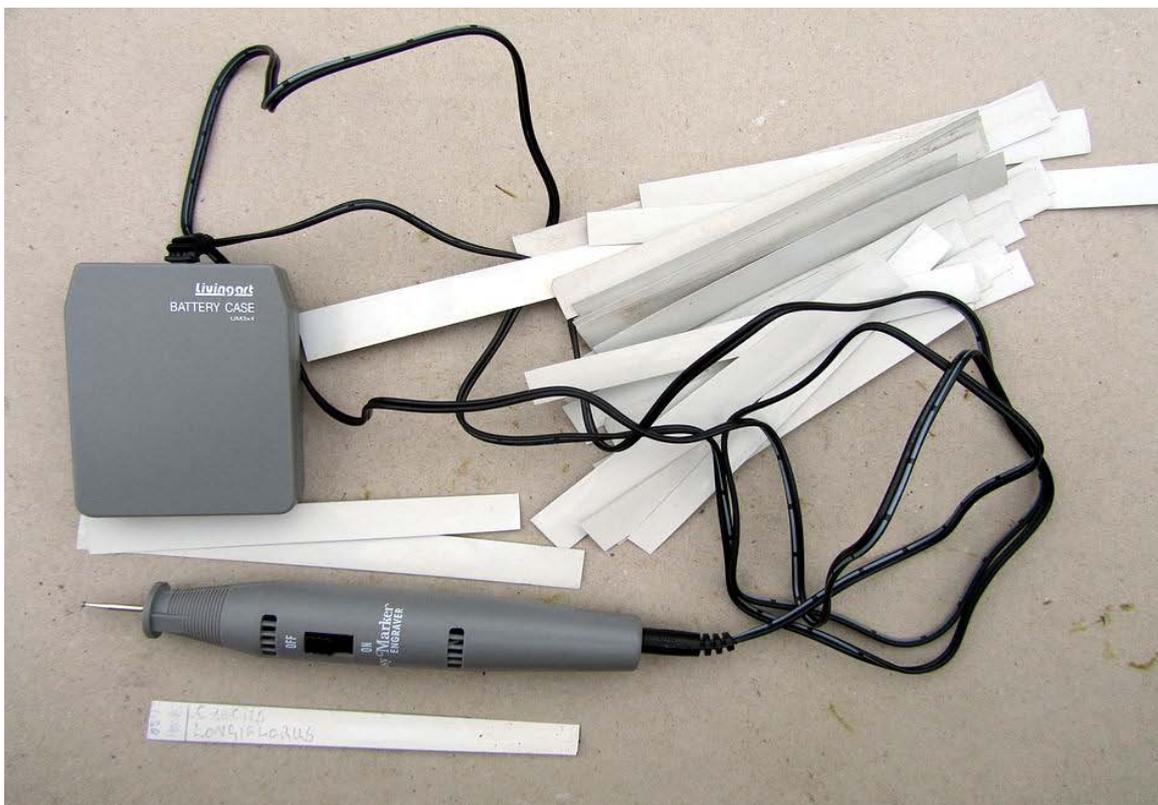
Crocus laevigatus continues to open flowers on the occasional days when the temperature rises enough. At last the sun has risen high enough in the sky to hit the bulb houses for a few hours around mid day - to help raise the temperature I close the doors. Seed variation in colour can be seen especially in the three flowers above but close inspection shows subtle variations through all the seedlings.





In the pot above you can see some **Crocus longiflorus** seed germinating – from the label I can tell that I sowed these seeds as soon as they were ripe last May. I also point out that I sowed these seeds a good 5cm deep in the pot. I know from speaking to people that they are cautious about burying seeds so deep fearing that they are too small to

reach the surface. I can assure you that for seeds such as Crocus and Narcissus it is a huge advantage to sow them deeply as the young corms/ bulbs will form 5cms deep in the compost rather than under just a 1-2cm layer of grit if they were surface sown. I have shown my method of making labels from recycled venetian blinds [before](#) but my favourite engraver broke down so for the last year or so I had to resort to using plastic labels. Now I have found a new replacement engraver



that is just as good as my old one. It is so easy to use and I can engrave the label as quickly as I could write in pencil. An added advantage of this one is that it works from a battery pack making it much more portable than the old one that had to be plugged in.



A lovely dark form of **Crocus angustifolius** is showing its buds – I just hope we get enough warmth for the flowers to open.



Crocus biflorus nubigena

Crocus biflorus nubigena

It is so easy to get labels mixed up for a whole host of reasons. For some reason the label on this pot states that this is *Crocus laevigatus* raised from collected seed.

I do not know how or when the mix up occurred but it is obvious that what I have here is *Crocus biflorus nubigena*. This highlights that fact that we should always confirm the identity of our plants checking they are correctly labelled at every opportunity.

With *Crocus* the identity cannot be confirmed from the flowers alone, the leaves and corm tunic are also key diagnostic features.



I have a number of pots of yellow flowered *Crocus* flowering from collected seeds that I need to try and name. I suspect that some at least, like on the left, are ***Crocus sieheanus*** but I need to confirm this from the shape and width of the leaves when they form and finally from the corm tunic when I replot them in the summer. I have numbered each of the suspect pots and will file pictures of the key features for reference.



Two more pots to be named are they *Crocus chrysanthus* or *Crocus sieheanus*? I hope to know for certain by the summer. To me this is all part of the fascination of growing bulbs from seed – especially when wild collected seed is available.





Colchicum kesselringii

I was given this form of *Colchicum kesselringii* by a kind friend a number of years ago - I have another pot of with two seed raised clones that do not flower until a bit later. Seedling variation is not just confined to colour and shape but also when a plant will grow and the conditions it can tolerate. Growing from seed you are more likely to end up with forms that can tolerate your growing conditions and flower at an appropriate time.



Narcissus 'Cedric Morris'

Flowering much later than in recent years, Narcissus 'Cedric Morris' is only now starting to open its buds. You may notice that I try and refrain from using the commonly used phrase 'later than normal' for the simple reason that even after all my years of experience of growing I simply do not know what a 'normal' season is.



Narcissus romieuxii JCA805

The flowers on the many forms and hybrids of *Narcissus romieuxii* are now starting to open their flowers - the downside is that the stems have been growing slowly all through December and January and many are so weak and floppy that they cannot hold the flowers erect. How I admired the pictures shown by Tatsuo Yamanaka from Japan of his plants in the [Narcissus pages](#) of the forum the flower stems were short and compact and the plants was beautifully proportioned. Try as I have I can rarely reproduce that look in Aberdeen. I have heard of methods such as keeping the bulbs dry for much longer but there is a big danger then of the bulbs breaking down into many non-flowering bulbils as a result of lack of moisture at critical times. I now accept that we live some 20degrees too far North to flower these beauties as they are meant to be seen but if we moved we would be in trouble with the summer heat something that would not liked by most of the other plants we grow and love.



This is a seedling from *Narcissus* 'Camoro' which is itself a hybrid between *Narcissus cantabricus monophyllus* and *N. romieuxii*.

Fortunately it is a fertile hybrid capable of producing seed and I believe some of the seedlings are even better plants than the original which is itself a very fine specimen.



Another group of seedlings of unknown parentage discovered as self sown bulbs in the sand plunge. A few years ago I featured this plant in a bulb log because most of the flower stems had two flowers. Since then I have cloned the bulbs into individual pots but unfortunately there have been no further incidents of twin flowers – I continue to live in hope.





There is still plenty of promise of Narcissus flowers this year as the ones that normally start to flower in February and March are showing buds and many that would have been flowering for months in many a year are also just opening.

I grow the biggest majority of this group of Narcissus in 7cm pots but that does not mean I do not get lots of flowers, my record stands at 39 flowering stems in a 7cm pot and the one below has 22.



Narcissus romieuxii x Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus.

There will be much more on Narcissus in coming weeks.....