



BULB LOG 12..... 21st March 2013

I apologise for the lateness of this week's Bulb Log- I normally aim to post it around mid-day on a Wednesday.

I have been away since last Friday and only got back on Wednesday afternoon so I have not had the time to spend on taking pictures and writing the log.

Firstly I was speaking to the Fritillaria Group at Wisley Gardens on Sunday and had hoped to get some pictures from the display of plants and the gardens to share with you however there were lots of people to chat to and I never even got time to take my camera out in the rain!



Tate Gallery London

Staying on with friends in London allowed me to see two major retrospective exhibitions on Monday - the first at Tate Britain was of works by Kurt Schwitters an artist that I am very interested in. I regularly apply collage and assemblage in my own art work and Schwitters was one of the early pioneers of these mediums so I had much to learn from seeing so many works gathered together in real life – so much better than illustrations in a book.





Pink Floyd fans will recognise Battersea Power Station



Vauxhall Bridge looking east



The other exhibition I was booked to see was at Tate Modern and I used the river ferry to take me between the two venues. It is by far the fastest way between these two great galleries, not expensive at around £5 and it takes you past some of the most famous landmarks along the Thames.



Houses of Parliament and Westminster Bridge



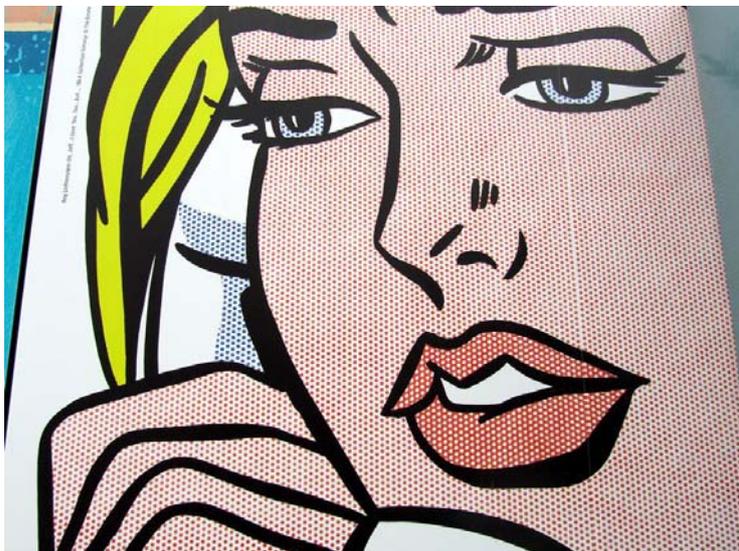
The artist's eye in me is always drawn to colour, shape and texture and I was as captivated by the mooring rope lying on the bright blue deck of the ferry as I was by the passing landmarks.





The other Exhibition was by Roy Lichtenstein a leading exponent of the Pop Art movement- I am sure most of you would recognise some of his images.

Both exhibitions are captivating and I added greatly to my knowledge of these artists – including their shared use of the popular mechanised image in their subject matter as the details below shows. I recommend a visit.



Roy Lichtenstein



Kurt Schwitters

I travelled back north as far as Edinburgh on Tuesday where I gave a talk to the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society at the RBGE. There I spoke with many regular Bulb Log followers –I thank you all for your support it is the only reason I continue.



My intention was to take pictures for the Bulb Log as soon as I arrived home and above is one I took mid –



Wednesday afternoon but alas I was too tired after my travels and decided to start fresh. On Thursday morning I got up to find that there had been another light fall of snow over night as winter refuses to release us from its grip.

Join me as I walk around the garden for the first time since my return - the rest of the log will have few words but is a photo essay of what I was seeing. One of the most asked questions during my talks was regarding the use of sand beds, see left, to grow bulbs in the open garden.

Realising the amount

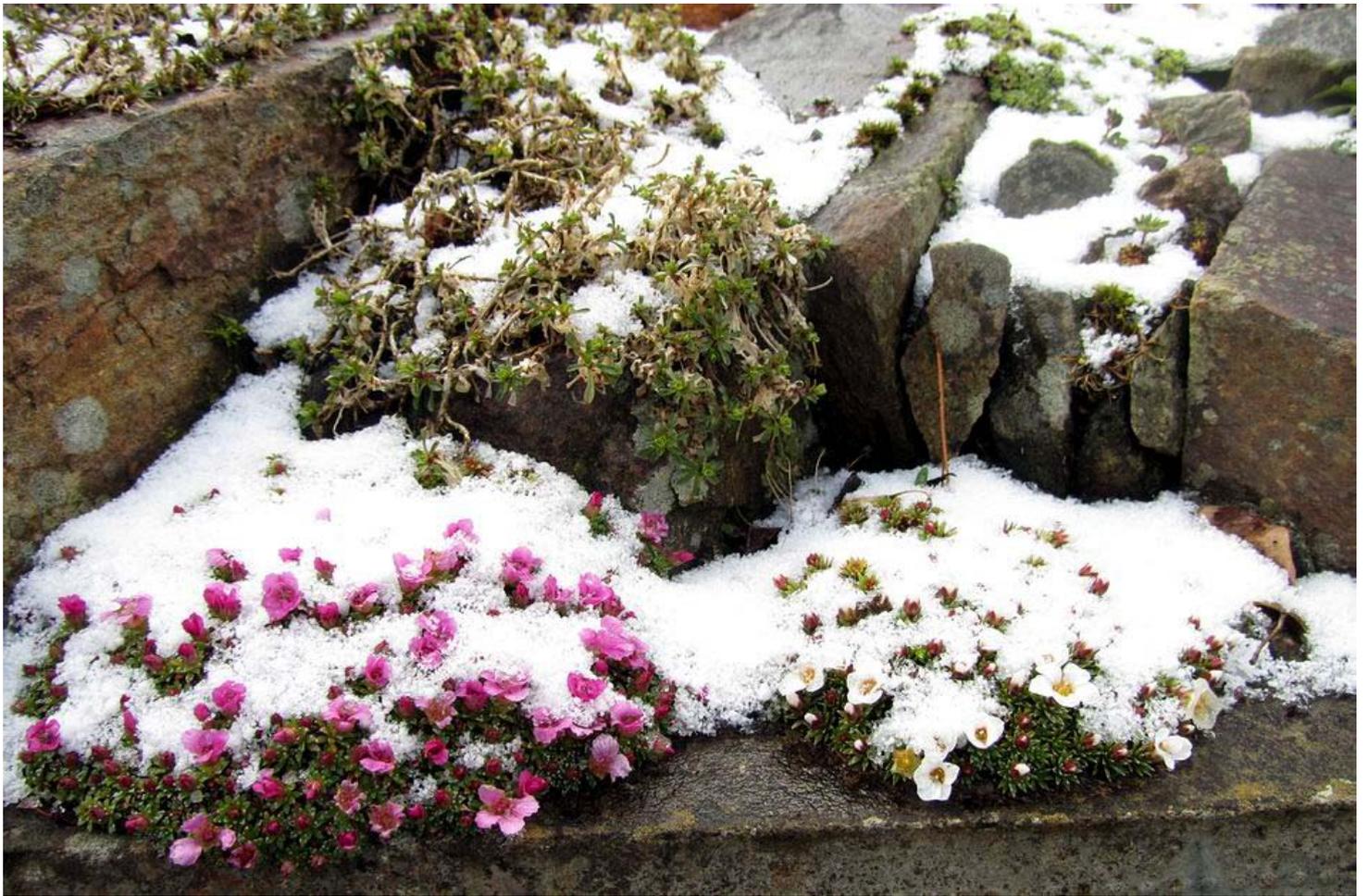
of interest in growing this way I will highlight my sand bed trials during the year.



Primula marginata trough



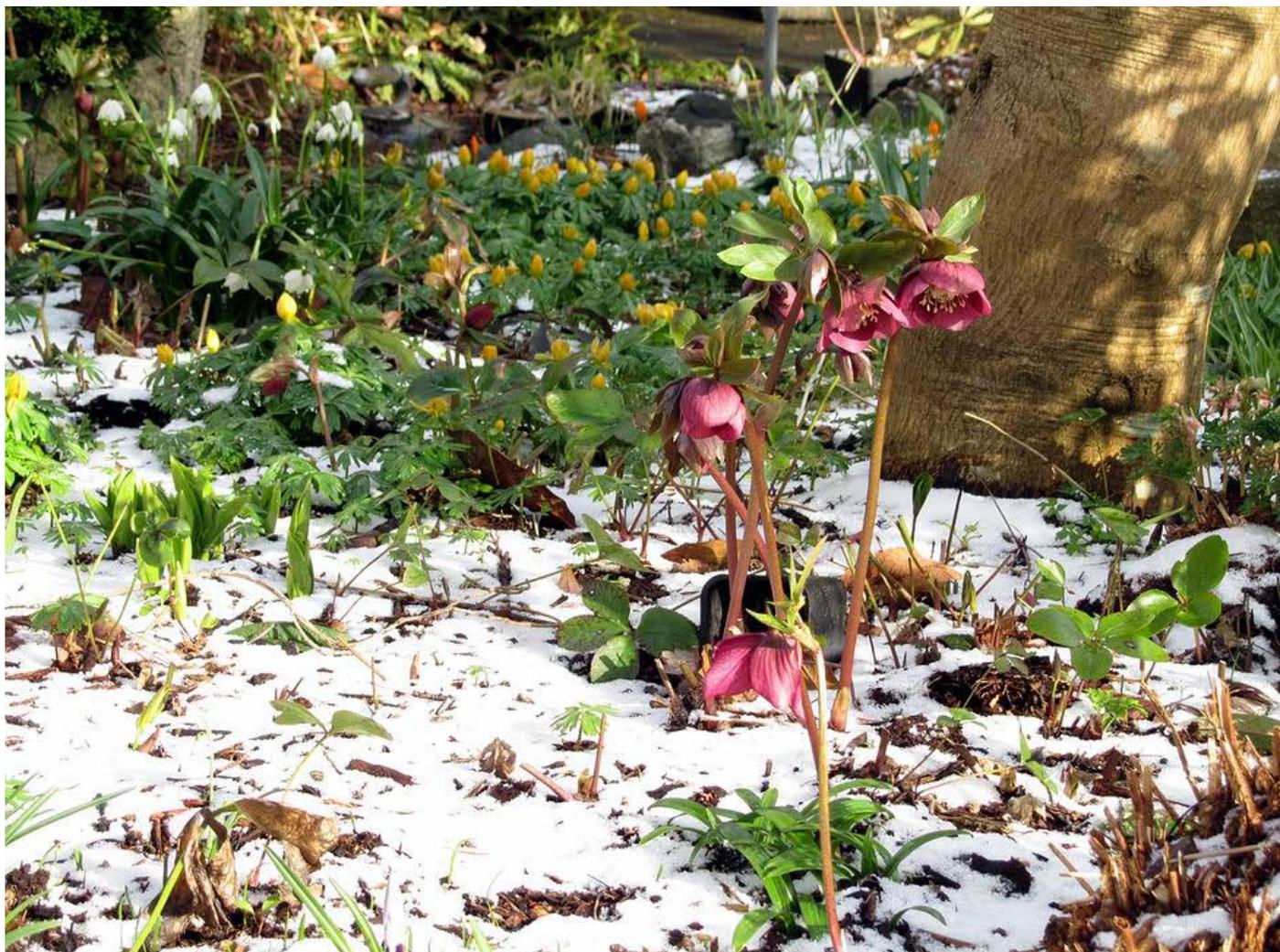
This trough is full of the double form of *Sanguinaria canadensis* – being in a trough makes it easy for me to tip it out and propagate it every year during the summer dormancy. A number of years ago while re-potting I discovered a single *Galanthus* seedling in the compost. This seedling has gradually increased over the years and now it provides a trough full of interest before the *Sanguinaria* emerges.



In a raised bed the early *Saxifraga* flowers peek out through the snow and ice.



Potted *Erythronium*, mostly seed raised, in the plunge are well into growth waiting for the temperature to rise.



Helleborus, Eranthis and Galanthus feature in many beds.





Two views of the bulb bed.





Above a group of snowdrops and below, in an adjacent bed, *Corydalis malkensis* flowers are developing fast.





One of the other most asked questions is do we open our garden to the public – to which I quickly answer no. The main reason for this is that it is no longer suitable for large numbers of visitors. The plants have taken over most of the paths – above you can just see the edge of what was a 1 metre wide pathway with paving slabs peeking out from under the spreading plants – in this case *Celmisia walkeri*.



Hellebore



This bed currently features two forms of 'yellow' Hellebore cultivars, one with a contrasting dark maroon centre. Among other plants these share a bed with Colchicum – you can see the leaves just emerging – and they work very well together.





At this time the snowdrop flowers are just starting to go over as *Corydalis solida* flowers are emerging to take over the limelight for their season.



Despite the cold and snow *Fritillaria* seed is germinating in the same bed. Many gardens just have mature specimens and as many of you know my aim is to have a garden full of plants of all ages from seedlings all the way up to flowering size. That is why I am actively allowing the bulbs and other plants to naturalise - which means they are sowing themselves in the garden.



Sand Bed

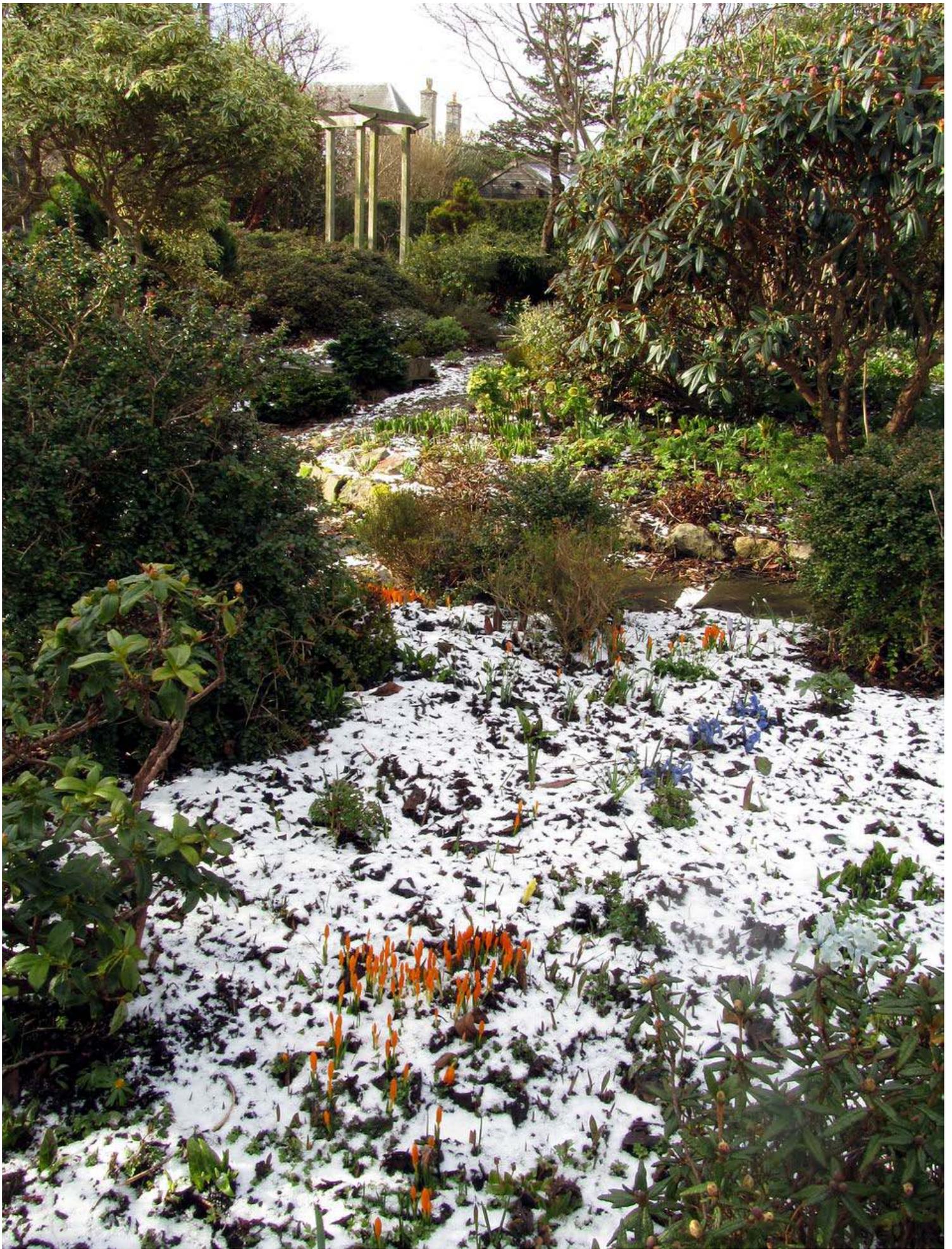


Above is the first sand bed specifically for planting out bulbs that I built in 2006 and has proved so successful.

Basically it is just a pile of sand, at least 30cms deep, contained with concrete paving edging. As our natural soil is sandy and very well drained I can just build a sand bed directly on the ground but if you have heavy poorly drained ground you will have to make good drainage before you lay your sand.

Sharp builder's sand is what you need and the deeper it is the better it will be as both the drainage and moisture retention will improve.

On the left **Iris winogradowii** flower buds have poked through.



A final view for this week looking back across the garden – next week I will highlight what is flowering in the bulb houses.....