



BULB LOG 06.....5th February 2014



Cyclamen coum

More of the winter/spring flowering bulbs are appearing in the garden; such as Cyclamen coum which is now looking good in a sand bed. After years of trying to establish this plant in our northern garden we finally seem to have found an environment that suits it as it is flowering and self seeding around this sand bed. The tolerance to environmental conditions of each subsequent garden generation of seedlings will move towards our garden's conditions. I have established a number of plants such as Erythronium montanum and E. sibiricum which were difficult to

grow at first but after two or three generations we had plants that grew well in our garden. We did not have to select the plants – in fact the plants selected us with those that could not tolerate our conditions dying out so that only those with genes that tolerate our cool damp conditions live to pass them on – natural selection in action.



Cyclamen coum

This is a nicely coloured form of *Cyclamen coum* that I have grown in a pot for years it mostly lives outside in a frame, only coming inside in wet summers and if we have bad weather when it comes into flower. This winter it has been outside all the time.



Iris histrio



Iris histrio is flowering both in the garden and under glass. It is perfectly hardy for us but the strong winds plus battering rain or snow, not to mention the slugs, can damage the flowers so I like to keep some inside for protection.



Galanthus reginae olgae seedlings sown in October 2009 are growing well having germinated in 2011- the first flowers may come next year. So: how long should you keep un-germinated seed pots in the hope that they might germinate?



If they are bulbous I will keep them for some years – a similar pot of seed of *Galanthus* sown at exactly the same time in 2009 is only now germinating - along with a number of weeds picked up in the seed frame which, by the time you read this, will be gone. So if you have space, hang on to your bulbous seed pots for as long as you can, I have had some germinate after ten years – if you do not have space scatter the contents of the seed pot on a garden bed where there is still some chance that seed can germinate and provide a surprise some time in the future.



Fritillaria house

There are the first signs of fritillaria shoots in the pots in the frit-house but what is most interesting is the self sown *Narcissus* that have placed themselves into the pots of frits, above you see a nice selection which I will look at.



A really good deep yellow form is forming a nice clump which I will mark separate out in the summer – I will have to be careful as there is also a slightly taller pale coloured Narcissus in the same pot.



I really like this seedling as it has good colour, a very pleasing shape and robust stems that are not too tall. As a self sown seedling I can only speculate about its parents but I would be fairly confident that *Narcissus romieuxii* is one.



Narcissus seedlings



Above another couple of seedlings sharing a Fritillaria pot show how much variation you can get. Of course I cannot say if both the seeds fell from the same capsule but I have had this level of variation and more from my deliberate sowings.

On the left, yet another variation.

Narcissus seedling



Narcissus seedling

Some will have a lobed corona like this seedling – but you have to check them over a few years to confirm that this feature is fixed as in my observations it can be a transient effect - there one year and not the next. It can sometimes also be partial lobbing around one section of the corona but not evenly displayed all round.

I suppose what I am saying is that sometimes lobbing/scalloping of the corona is a genetic feature and sometimes an environmental one.



Narcissus seedling

Yet another: I get the feeling we could really challenge the 'Drop-fiends' and the number of snow drop names if we got going naming all of these Narcissus seedlings. I have certain criteria for naming – they should be good-looking, different and/or increase well before I would want to name one.



Narcissus seedling

Yet another, this time in a pot of Crocus so if I have not convinced you to grow your bulbs from seed yet maybe the chance to raise plants like this will get you enthused.



Narcissus 'Joy Bishop' is a known clone with a nicely lobed corona that increases well and flowers freely. The spotting on these flowers is a result of the terrible wet conditions we have had over the last weeks.



Narcissus 'Atlas Gold'

Narcissus 'Atlas Gold' is a good yellow cultivar of *N. romieuxii* perhaps this is the seed parent of the deep yellow seedling I showed earlier.



Narcissus romieuxii JWB 8913

Or perhaps it was *Narcissus romieuxii* JWB 8913 a selection from a John Blanchard collection.



Bulb house

You can see above how uncontrolled pollination can happen when you have so many promiscuous plants growing so closely together as we have in our bulb houses and gardens.



Grey Mould

Another problem we have with such a dense population is grey mould, examples of which I found this week.

With the extremely wet (even for us) weather we have had for weeks now the air in the bulb houses becomes saturated that allied with little air movement make ideal conditions for mould to attack.



It is most obvious above on the base of the leaves and the emerging flower buds but the wet conditions also allows moulds and other rots to transfer down the leaves and stems to the bulbs. I noticed some flowers not opening properly and when I gave a gentle tug I discovered the reason- rot at the base. Holding off watering until they get quite dry should stop this spreading and in extreme cases I might need to lift a pot of Narcissus out of the plunge and dry it out prematurely. Stopping the growth like this works for true bulbs which add extra layers each year but not for corms which have to replace themselves completely every year. I should also say that I have to be even more vigilant now I am using all plastic pots as they are less forgiving of over watering than the porous clay ones – but I would not change back. It is hard for even fans to get good air movement to the base of such crowded pots.



Next two pictures are from the many forms of **Narcissus bulbocodium** I have had from Brian Duncan.



Narcissus bulbocodium



Narcissus 'Craigton Clumper'

You can see the spotting water damage on the flowers of Narcissus 'Craigton Clumper' it tends to happen after the flowers have peaked. These flowers can last for a long time – I have had Narcissus flowers last for over eight weeks.



This wee group of flowers include **Narcissus romieuxii**, **Narcissus bulbocodium** and hybrids.



A small section of the 7cm, 8cm pot plunge illustrates you can have a lot of flowers in mid winter with just the protection of cold glass in our climate. As an additional caution I have solid warming cables in the bottom of the plunges, not to heat the pots but to prevent the frost penetrating to the basal plates which can, if prolonged, kill the bulbs, I know this from bitter experience. Apart from that these bulbs are easy to grow and flower if you follow a simple regime of watering and feeding as I have described many times in these pages.....