



BULB LOG 29 22nd July, 2015





It was around thirty years ago, while on my hands and knees weeding the gravel areas around our slab drive way, that it dawned on me – here is a gravel bed just what rock gardeners want to have – since then I have scattered seeds into these areas. The first seeds that I sowed were of *Geranium sanguineum* which has in turn scattered its own seeds and spread to form a wonderful carpet the whole length of the driveway. The RHS have a campaign called [Greening Grey Britain](#) which hopes to

discourage the conversion of so many front gardens into car parks by encouraging the use of plants – I could not agree more.



The catapult action which the *Geranium* has evolved to distribute its seed is very successful as plants have found their way onto the narrow bed on top of the wall – it has even spread over the hedge into our neighbour's front garden. We did not stop with the geranium continuing to scatter seed of subjects that we think are an appropriate size which will extend the season of flowering interest - this includes many bulbous species.

In the foreground are the ripe open seed heads of *Erythronium* ready to scatter their seeds. I do assist some of the bulbs by taking a handful of the seeds and distributing them over the length of the gravel to give us a more even spread of *Erythronium* and *Fritillaria* etc.



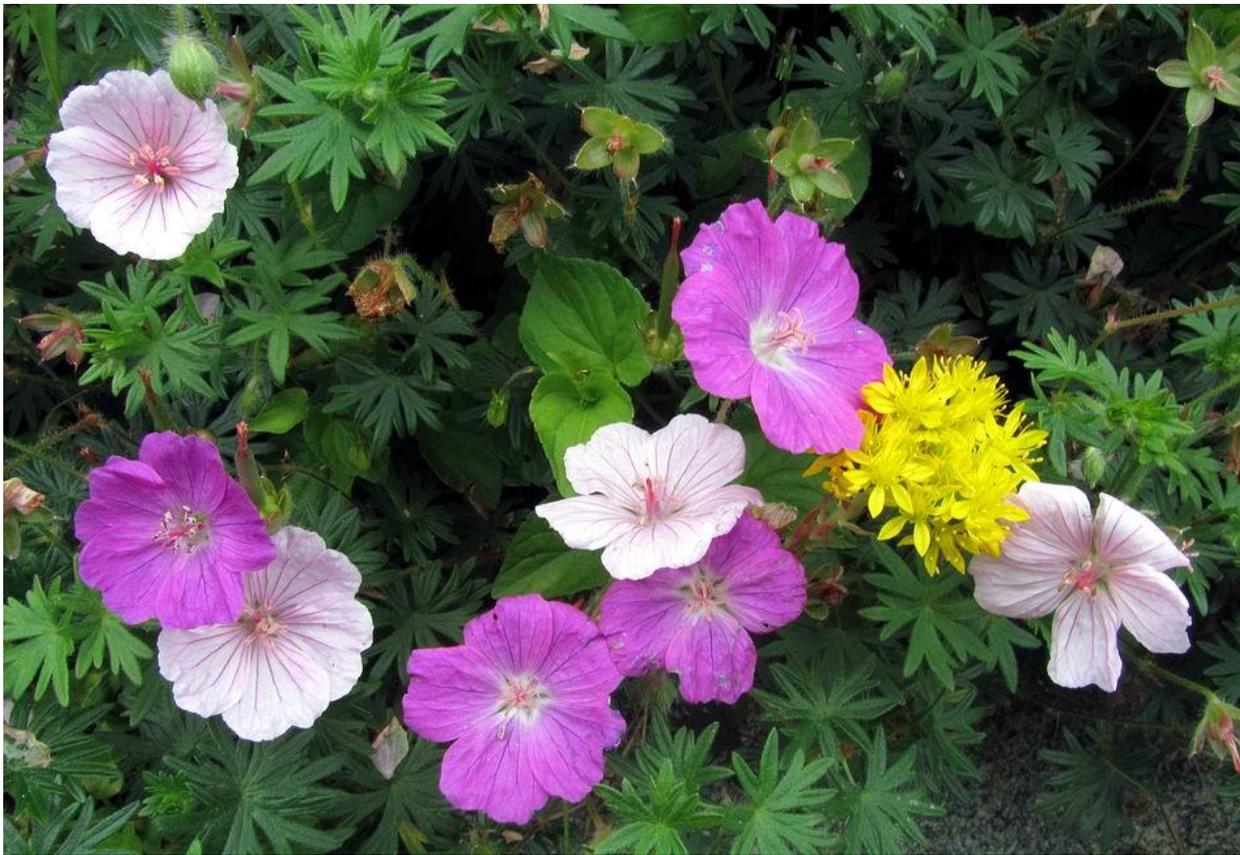
We have two driveways and this is the one that is used only occasionally by visiting cars so the plants are well spread. I try and only sow plants that are low enough to allow a car to pass over without damaging them however as the stems of many extend as the seed capsules ripen no cars are allowed in during this short period. This would not be the case for most folks, I imagine!



Digitalis grandiflora is another success - even though it is a bit taller it flowers at the same time as the bulbs are in seed and the car ban is in place. – The *Dactylorhiza* have also self-seeded with a bit of assistance from me as I



shake the stems of ripe seed across the area. I am happy to allow some taller plants, like *Digitalis purpurea* to grow along the outside edges as they are not affected by any car movements. In contrast to the laborious task of keeping the gravel weed free the combined mass of these plants intermingling as they do brings us, and many passers-by, such pleasure.



Our population of *Geranium sanguineum* originally came from Jack Drake's Inschriach Nursery around 1980 and comes in shades from pale pink, never pure white, through to deep pink and here it contrasts well with the sharp yellow flowers of a *Sedum*.



A *Hypericum* that found its way in is also allowed to stay on the side at the base of the wall as it gives colours from its flowers, berries and foliage over a long season. The delicate flowers of *Saxifraga x urbium* dance above bringing a unity to this small vignette.



There is a lot of shade from the hedge and other shrubs towards the garden end of the wall - this does not suit some of the plants but still we can use Ivy, Epimedium and Dactylorhiza among others.



A slab pathway along the front of the house also has narrow gravel areas along the edges these are also planting areas that now flow seamlessly into the garden beds.



Despite being knocked flat by the persistent heavy rain and wind Corydalis 'Craigton Blue' still manages to look good and the scent is undiminished as it leads us round towards the other drive way where our wee car lives.

Our car is used very little so it sits there all day most days – as a result no plants grow in the dark area under the car. When I was working the car was only there at night, as I was out all



day, allowing light in so some plants did grow under where the car sits. The rest of the gravel is well planted now with the exception of the area on the top right which we need to keep clear to get in and out of the house.



Again we can allow some of the taller plants such as *Campanula persicifolia* to grow along the edge near the hedge.



You may have noticed the wee yellow flowered bulb peeking through the growth below the *Campanula*. This is the result of many odd packets of surplus seeds we have randomly scattered at some time. Sadly this gem, *Tritelia ixioides*, is reluctant to increase .



From the street passers-by get glimpses into the garden like the view above over the new foliage of *Rhododendron yakushimanum* towards the blue and white forms of *Campanula persicifolia*.



Celmisia's daisy flowers rise out of the mass plantings that carpet the ground.

As the season progresses Dactylorhiza flower along with the Corydalis 'Craigton Blue' - as the Dicentra starts to retreat back underground for the summer, primulas including Primula florindae in many colours are just emerging and starting into flower.



Mixing foliage types is always a good idea – contrasting the spiky grey leaves of Aciphylla with the large flat leaves of Podophyllum and all the ferny like leaves of the Corydalis and Dicentra has given us months of interest.



The contrast in shapes and textures is further enhanced by the mixture of colours, the warm pinks and purples of the *Dicentra* and *Dactylorhiza* flowers harmonise with the cool blue of the *Corydalis* – the *Dicentra* leaves also bring contrast as the soft green leaves slowly turn red and orange as they come to the end of their season. *Primula vialii* flowers are just

opening and blend into this mix of colours so well that you may overlook them if you do not look carefully.



Primula vialii flowers and Dicentra formosa leaves make a stunning colour combination. If you have not checked out the latest [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplements](#) yet, have a look at this one on [troughs](#).....