



BULB LOG 02.....13<sup>th</sup> January 2016



Gardening is about creating habitat and how we can adjust the growing environment. Some of the methods are well used such as making raised beds which, among other things, will improve drainage.

One of the many things I have learnt from the garden is how the habitats you create will change over time. The front cover picture shows a raised bed I first created over thirty years ago for dwarf ericaceous plants - over the years it had become over grown and needed a drastic change. One change was to remove the lower branches of the pine tree which opened up all the space underneath it as a new habitat and planting opportunity. You can see how the pine acts like an umbrella offering some shelter to the ground below and that is what I am trying to capitalise on by planting both under the pine and down the sloping front of the wall. I started this change a few years ago and



have already started to establish colony of *Trillium rivale* among other plants there – check out [Bulb Log 1515](#) to be reminded of the progress to date and enjoy some welcome spring colour in these dark winter days.

Whilst we can make adjustments to garden habitats in an attempt to suit the needs of favoured plants we have little control over the major influence that our weather has on what we can grow. We have to accept that we will never be able to grow bulbs or plants that require a warm/hot dry summer in our Aberdeen garden, however we can grow those that like a cool moist summer.

This frame full of pots offers another habitat, one that can be further adjusted by covering it over to keep out the rain or snow should we wish. In reality I only cover this frame once the new spring growth emerges if heavy and prolonged frosts are forecast – other than that it sits open most of the year.

Walking back from checking the bulb houses my eye is drawn to **Cyclamen coum** flowering in the small sand bed. This is a very good example of how important even small changes can be to plants. We tried to establish *Cyclamen coum* in the open garden for years with little success – we tried it everywhere and only a few have survived in the gravel path areas but have never grown that well. Then I scattered some seeds into this sand bed when I first made it and there they have flowered and self-seeded well.





Short of migrating, gardeners can do very little about their weather and for more than twelve months we have had little in the way of what we would consider to be normal seasons. Last winter was mild and continued into spring, which never really came and then there was a wet, cool summer followed by a very brief sunny autumn before this winter arrived. Temperature-wise it has been mild, much like last year, but we are experiencing record breaking rainfall. The shoots of spring growth are already advancing such as the Trillium and Galanthus above and the flowers on the hellebores are fast extending.



I must remove last year's leaves to allow us to enjoy the flowers better.

## Podophyllum leaves

I cannot remember ever seeing a new shoot emerging on the Podophyllum this early, nor last season's leaves still being green - not cut back by frosts - this late. This is what makes gardening so interesting and challenging - even though it is a cyclical process of the seasonal growth year after year no two years are ever the same.



**Podophyllum shoot**

Four chapters on some of the less common and challenging to grow Erythronium species follow.....

*Erythronium species nova*



### **Erythronium new species?**

I grew this *Erythronium* for the first time from seed collected on Mount Prevost and passed on to me by Ian Christie. It was described as a form of *Erythronium grandiflorum* but it is very different from any form of that species we grow and I suspect this could be a new species.

A close up of the flower reveals some of the diagnostics used to distinguish the species such as the filaments and these differ slightly, being longer and narrower than in the various forms of *E. grandiflorum* that we grow. Also the style is much more deeply divided into three recurving stigma lobes which are also covered in a hair-like structure.



You can see from these pictures that this plant has plain green leaves.

**Erythronium  
new species?**



**Erythronium new species?**



This plant, as grown by us to date, is small, being no more than 10cms tall with single yellow flower per stem but I feel we may not have grown it to its best and we may find it grows a bit bigger with possibly more flowers per stem as the bulbs mature.

## Seed



### Erythronium new species seed

We have now flowered this plant twice since sowing the original seed in 2006 and each time we also got seed to set above left is the dried garden seed after being stored - on the right is the same seed soaked overnight and ready for sowing in September 2014.

### Erythronium new species

The same seed as shown above germinating 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2015.





The bulbs we raised from the original seed along with some of the seeds set. New roots were forming as I repotted these bulbs in August, so I suspect this species would not take kindly to being too hot and dry in the summer.



As the seedlings mature I look forward to seeing whether we can firmly establish this delightful compact plant into our garden

**. Erythronium new species?**

*Erythronium pluriflorum*



## **Erythronium pluriflorum**

Erythronium pluriflorum is another species that we find very challenging to grow.

This is a small yellow-flowered species from California where it is found in the south central Sierra Nevada.

This is the first flowering of an immature specimen so it does not necessarily represent the full stature of the plant.

It is recorded that this species can have up to ten flowers per stem.



What can be seen, especially in the detail above, is that the style and filaments are all yellow matching exactly the colour of the petals.

The leaves are plain green and our plants have grown to between 10 to 15cms tall.

We have not had a seed set nor have we had any increase from the few bulbs we originally raised from collected seed.



*Erythronium purpurascens*





**Erythronium purpurascens**



*Erythronium purpurascens* is one of the more challenging species to grow in the garden. It is a snow-melt species that does not adapt well to our maritime climate with its poorly defined seasons. It may grow better in more Northern gardens where winters are long and cold followed by a warm spring then cool summers.

The plants pictured are our best efforts to grow this small white flowered species. The specific name *purpurascens* refers to the pale purple colour the flowers turn as they age.

### **Flowers**

The flowers are white with a yellow centre and there can be one or several on a stem depending on the size of the bulb.

The filaments are long and slender, the pollen pale yellow and the stigma is entire or slightly divided into three.

Unfortunately we have never had a seed set from our own plants to give us the chance of increasing the numbers of this charming species.

**Bulb**

The bulbs are small for the genus and so far our bulbs have shown no signs of making offsets.

**Leaves**

**Erythronium purpurascens** is a small plant with plain green leaves growing to a maximum height of 10 to 15cms.



*Erythronium purpurascens* growing beside the larger pink *Erythronium revolutum*.

*Erythronium taylorii*





**Erythronium taylorii**



*Erythronium taylorii* is a relatively new species, described in 1998.

It has only been found in a single site in Tuolumne County, California where it has a fairly restricted habitat growing on steep rocky wooded cliffs.

We were among those lucky enough to get seeds which were sown and grown on, resulting in our first flowers on this species in 2006.

The flowers are white with a yellow throat and the pollen is white to cream. The filaments are bent through 90 degrees, holding the anthers out to the side until they start to dehisce then they straighten out so the ripe pollen is held forward close to the stigma.

The style is almost entire; only very slightly divided into three at the very tip.

We have had up to three flowers on a single stem.

**Erythronium taylorii**



**Erythronium  
taylorii  
Seed**

We got the first flowers to set seed which we duly sowed producing a reasonable germination.

**Bulbs**



Erythronium taylorii bulbs are of reasonable size and early indications were that it would produce some offsets.

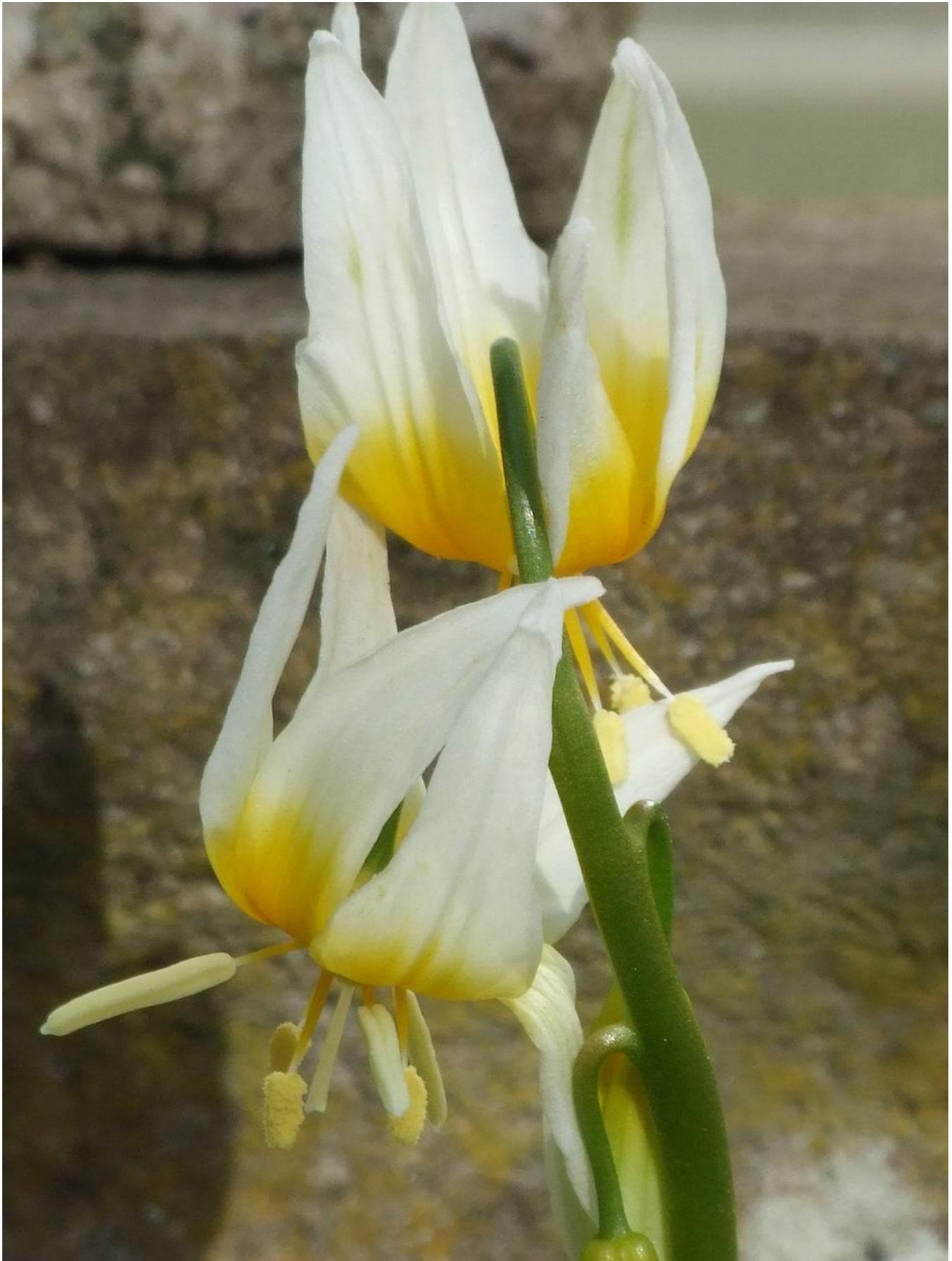


***Erythronium taylorii***

The leaves of *Erythronium taylorii* are plain green.

I had high hopes that this plant, with its graceful flowers, would prove a great addition to our garden but our early success soon turned into a struggle to keep this plant alive. I am at a loss to know what suddenly caused its demise: the most likely cause is that coming from a single location with such a restricted habitat type that it simply could not adjust to our climate.

I had hoped that the garden seed we got may result in some clones more able to grow for us but that has not happened as the seedlings also succumbed. I am not aware of any one who is growing and flowering this plant successfully yet.



***Erythronium taylorii***