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Bulb Log Diary

ISSN 2514-6114

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BULB LOG 35.....30th August 2017





Veratrum fimbriatum - fully described in [IRG](#)

As well as enjoying common plants, some of which are regularly described as weeds, we are continually trying out new plants especially ones that will extend the flowering season bringing something different into the garden and the Californian endemic *Veratrum fimbriatum* ticks both those boxes. The heavily fringed flowers are indeed fimbriate living up to the specific name. It has proved hardy for the four years we have grown it although it has not experienced a cold winter yet and this is the second year of flowering. As you can see the leaves seem especially popular with the snails but it is only as the flower stem rises that they attack it – another plant growing in the back garden, shown below, has not been foraged yet.



Veratrum fimbriatum



Trillium seed pod



While listening to the radio I heard them speaking about the garden 'winding down for the winter' – it is my opinion that anyone who thinks that gardening is not for twelve months of the year is not a real gardener. Gardening is an endless cycle and it is difficult to find a starting/finishing point to the growing year, however I have no doubts that in our garden September is the starting point. The yellowing Trillium leaves, which are now feeding the snails, have served their annual purpose of feeding the plant. The leaves have supported the flowers which in turn have been successfully pollinated resulting in a fat seed pod full of seed – in addition a fat underground bud from which next

season's growth will emerge has grown. The seed is now ready for sowing which is the start of the growth/gardening process and will result in a whole batch of new plants. Previously I would have sown all the seed carefully into pots but at this later stage in our gardening life I am happy to just scatter the seeds in areas where I would be happy to have more Trilliums in due course.



Meconopsis baileyi (widely still called by the previous name of *M. betonicifolia*)



Meconopsis baileyi has been described as being monocarpic and if you are growing in a hot dry garden that may well be the case but in our garden it is strongly perennial



As the flower stems ripen, shedding their seeds, it will die back however if the summer growing conditions remain cool and moist a number of new growths will form around the base, these appear as new leaves while the flowers fade. I will scatter a small amount of NPK 7-7-7 fertiliser as this new growth appears to ensure a strong growth.

Having collected the seeds I carefully remove the old stems to limit the chance of rot in our damp winters affecting the dormant buds.



The Meconopsis on the rock garden are all tidied up now to allow the new growths to flourish before they retreat underground for the winter – these will provide next season's flowers, All these Meconopsis self-seeded into the rock garden bed; a process which you will observe continues into the Erythronium plunge and adjacent beds. In the spring it is the turn of the smaller bulbs, Crocus, Narcissus etc to flower in this rock garden bed at which time there are no signs of the Meconopsis being there. Some autumn flowering Crocus and Colchicum are starting to appear and will soon flower around these Meconopsis.

The dried leaves of Colchicum agrippinum lying on the ground are currently the only evidence that they are there but this will change when the flowers appear in a few weeks' time.

Once more this bed is also full of spring flowering plants which are currently underground allowing the autumn growing plants, such as Eucomis bicolor to share the same space





Eucomis bicolor



Having grown in our garden for over thirty years Eucomis bicolor has proven long time hardy however we have lost Plantings of Eucomis autumnalis so this one is kept in a pot which spends the winter dried out under glass.

Eucomis autumnalis

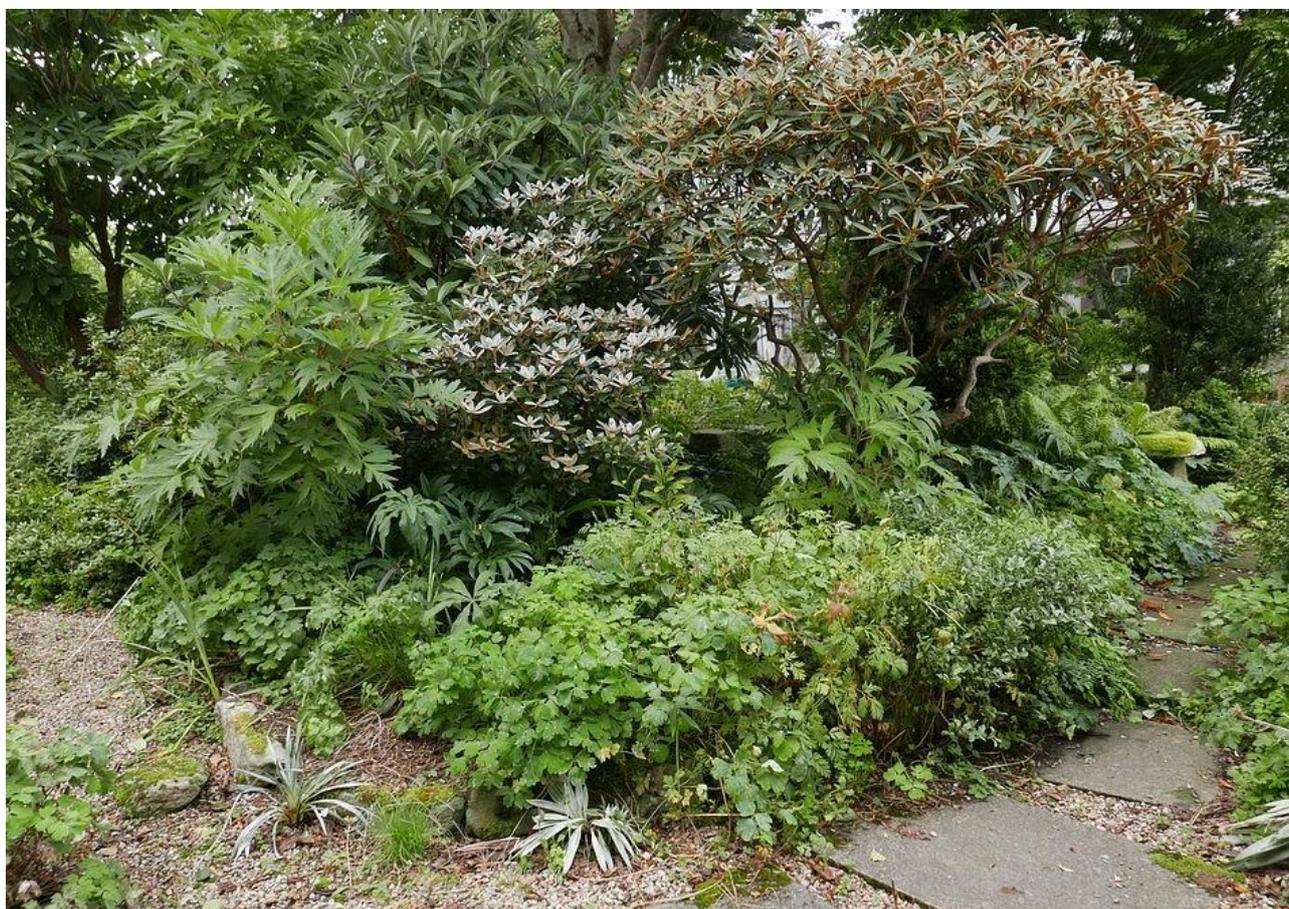


The first of the Colchicums are coming into flower now adding colour to the beds where much of the surrounding foliage, having served its seasonal purpose, is now dying back – it is important to remember that the Colchicum leaves will follow in the spring so take this into account when planting them - this is no excuse not to grow them.





Colchicums growing happily at the base of a Rhododendron.



There is a good planting of Colchicum, mostly *speciosum album*, in the bed in the foreground so it is time to cut back the *Aquilegia* and other foliage so we can enjoy the Colchicum flowers when they appear.



Cutting these leaves back early will not prevent them growing strongly again next year, I do not cut back the Hellebore and Arisaema leaves – they will be left to die back naturally or removed in the winter accordingly.



Colchicum flowers by the light of a low sun.



The beauty of Colchicum flowers.





We raised the Clematis climbing over our swing seat from seed collected by the late Alastair McKelvie on one of his many Himalayan adventures – every winter I cut it right back to the stem and it puts on all this growth and covers itself in flowers. As we sit in the seat we are serenaded by the buzz of the many bees feeding from the thousands of flowers.





The view from the swing seat reminds me that this is the start of the year as I see the ripe seed capsules bursting open on the **Dactylorhiza** stems.



Unless you have laboratory conditions to germinate the seed I suggest that you do as I do - which is to gather some of capsules and scatter the masses of dust like seed around troughs and such places that will not be disturbed or cultivated for a few years. There is every chance new plants will appear.



***Fritillaria pallidiflora* seed capsule** ripe and ready to spill its contents; another indication that this is time to sow it.



Two of the three segments show the neat rows of perfectly stacked seed waiting to be blown on the wind, or sent to the Seed Exchange! Most of the seed capsules of the *Fritillaria* we grow in the open garden are ripe now and this is the perfect time to sow the seeds in contrast the seed from the ones we grow in the bulb houses ripened some months ago so we stored it dry in paper bags and will sow it now to be watered at the start of September.



Roscoea alpina

Roscoea alpina seed is also being shed –I will allow some of this to sow around the parent plant some I have gathered and scattered in other beds where I would like this plant.



Roscoea alpina



Erythronium caucasicum bulbs

So, if seed is the start and end of the cycle, here are some welcome results from a sowing of *Erythronium caucasicum* seeds collected in the Sochi region. Typically where *Erythronium* bulbs are grown in pots for a few years some will try to escape, this was carefully extracted by cutting the bottom edge of the pot and the bulbs were planted into the new bed along with *Erythronium sibiricum*.





Some *Corydalis mucronipetala* seed collected in the garden and sown immediately when it ripened last year (June 2016) is also now ready to be planted out into the same new bed.



Because the seed compost I mix is very open and gravelly (1-sand 1-leafmould and 1-gravel) I can carefully remove the pot and drop the contents onto a tray which allows me to remove all the seedlings without damaging the roots.



I could have left the seed pot until the spring before I planted it out but I think autumn is a good time while the soil is still warm enough to allow the young plants to establish their roots and there is no chance that they will dry out.



Arisaema leaves die back and collapse.



In the bulb houses there is also the indication that this is the start of the cycle as even though the sand is bone dry new growths are emerging from the **Tropaeolum tricolorum** above and **Muscari species** below – just in time as I prepare to apply the first storm on the 1st September - see next week.





Mutisia seed head.

Unlike those I heard speaking on the radio, our gardening does not stop for the winter, there is always plenty of activity like seed sowing, tree management then the flowering attention moves into the bulb houses where the first flowers will soon appear and continue until July.

Check out the latest [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#) for an autumn update.....