



BULB LOG 11.....15th March 2017





Erythronium dens-canis

Our first *Erythronium dens-canis* flowers of the season are now open and it is always these dark flowered forms growing in a basket of mixed seedlings. These seedlings come into flower at different times over the next few weeks and they vary from this lovely dark coloured variation through to the palest of pink. While each of the individual colours is attractive the best effect comes in a few weeks when they are all in flower and mixed together.



Erythronium dens-canis

I am always looking to widen the genetic base of the plants we grow so I was delighted when some years ago I got some seed of *Erythronium dens-canis* from the most eastern reaches of the known distribution for this species. Up to now I have grown this precious accession in a pot and last year we got a seed set so I sowed the seeds back into the same pot, here you can see a nice crop of seedlings alongside the parents. I think all gardeners have a duty to help conserve the plants we grow in our garden and the best way to do that is by continually raising them from seed and whenever possible to introduce new forms keeping the genetic diversity of the species as wide as possible.



Erythronium dens-canis



Even within these few flowers you can see the lovely variation between the dark-centered form above and the one on the left with the additional paler zone.



To maximise the chance of another successful seed set I have the pot in a bulb house and have been cross pollinating between the open flowers. In addition I have been using the pollen to pollinate the other forms of *Erythronium dens-canis* that are open around the garden, to widen their gene pool.



Erythronium dens-canis

Here you see another of these dark forms we have in the garden just starting to open and in the foreground you can compare and see the obvious different arrangement of the patterns on the leaves of one of the Western North American species



I am encouraged to see two shoots beside this plant of **Erythronium caucasicum** growing in the raised wall. Up to now I have found this species very reluctant to increase vegetatively at any rate.



There is real excitement as I await the opening of this pink form of **Erythronium caucasicum** – we did have a flower last year but due our weather it never managed to open successfully to display its beauty.



Sand Bed

I usually take the photographs for (and write the Bulb Log) over a number of days during which time things change and after lunch I found that the pink forms of *Erythronium caucasicum* have opened their flowers. Now I will be pollinating them with my paint brush in the hope of getting seed so I can increase this wee treasure.



***Erythronium caucasicum* pink form**



Even at this early stage of the season seed is already setting - here you see the pods of **Corydalis paczoskii** will soon shed their seed. This species seeds freely around our garden where it flowers early, then sets seed before most plants have awoken.



Corydalis paczoskii



Corydalis paczoskii

I have read that *Corydalis paczoskii* is of 'little garden merit' and if you are looking for a showy plant that will stand out in a border or compete with large plants, then that may well be the case. On the other hand if like me you are creating small landscapes, want something that is easy to grow, early flowering, does not damage companion plants then retreats back underground leaving the space for other plants then I can recommend this species.





Another good species which seeds freely around our garden is **Corydalis malkensis** – here it has seeded into a plunge basket of Erythronium but as with the previous species this plant will flower, set seed then disappear back underground causing no harm to the Erythronium.



Corydalis malkensis



Colour starts to return to this narrow bed at the edge of the Erythronium plunge where I seeded in Hepatica and Corydalis – the Meconopsis arrived from the adjacent rock bed by themselves.



We have different colour forms of **Corydalis solida** planted all over the garden and I continue to encourage them to spread both by seed and by splitting the clumps in May when they go dormant and it is easy to locate the tubers under the collapsed yellow leaves.



Although many more bulbs still have to flower in the bulb houses, in particular the Fritillaria, the mass flower power is now switching from undercover to the open garden.

As the narcissus flowers start to fade they will set seed (if successfully fertilised) and start to form next season's flower buds so to support the bulbs in this task it is time for me to feed them with a potassium rich fertiliser. I have applied my usual white powdered form sold in the UK as sulphate of potash. I place a small sprinkle onto the top of each pot before watering it in.



Check out previous [Bulb Logs](#) for full details of my feeding regime.



I like it when the benches in the bulb house look less like a collection of pots and resemble some of our outside plantings. *Corydalis*, *Galanthus*, *Narcissus* with *Tropaeolum tricolorum* climbing up the wall.



The first phase of flowering starts to pass as the *Galanthus* flowers show signs of aging but there is plenty more to come from this bulb bed



We try to keep our plantings as natural looking as they can be in a garden setting with sweeps of plantings passing from one bed to another.





Hellebores make wonderful companion plants for the early bulbs and as always we allow them to seed around.



Hellebores with Autumn Colchicum leaves appearing in the foreground.



Ideally adapted to our inclement weather, hellebores are adapted to deal with rain or snow.





Hellebore flowers vary widely in colour.





Some form clumps but my real preference is for the more natural look that you get when you allow them to self-seed mixing in with the bulbs as can be seen in the picture below.





The small whites, Molly and Megan, admire the flowers.



Many hellebore flowers hold their faces to the ground so you have to get inventive with the camera to capture their beauty. I enjoy trying to capture an unusual picture that may make people see things in a slightly different way.



Narcissus



Galanthus



I will leave you this week with these **Helleborus x ericsmithii** flowers to enjoy.....
Click to view the latest Bulb [Log Video Diary Supplement](#) I loaded after I posted last week's Bulb Log