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Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 09.....28th February 2018





Cyclamen coum and **Crocus tommasinianus** enjoying a spell of sunshine – as I write it is forecast that a change in atmospheric conditions will deliver us a cold blast of air from Siberia which will result in frosts and snow later this week – it could well be here when I post the Bulb Log on Wednesday.



Crocus abantensis grows well for us in a raised bed where they are among the first to flower every year. I divide them every few years as they clump up.



Moving under glass to the sand beds where these Crocus, of the biflorus group, are flowering but I need it to warm up enough to open the flowers then, with the help of Janis Ruksan's Crocus book, I hope to identify them.



Raised from seed **Crocus adanensis**



Raised from seed these *Crocus angustifolius* show some variation most noticeably in the shape of the petals.



Crocus angustifolius



Crocus angustifolius

I had just watered these beds and you will notice how the effect of watering has smoothed the surface of the sand – if I leave it like this it will attract the growth of moss, while it remains moist, then when it dries out it forms a crust that hinders the penetration of water so I always work the surface back to a crumb after watering.



Crocus atticus



Crocus cvijicii

Crocus cvijicii is also thriving and increasing in the sand bed, notice here that I have roughened up the surface of the sand after watering.



Crocus cvijicii



I have just received some Crocus seed which I am sowing directly into the sand beds. I will sow the seeds 3 to 4 cms deep but first I take pictures of the packets in place as a record. I can refer back to these pictures when the seeds germinate next year allowing me to identify the seedlings.



Crocus and Narcissus provide flowering interest early in the year before the main planting in these sand beds of Fritillaria start flowering or in many cases even emerge.



The first of the *Fritillaria* shoots can be seen pushing through but it will be some weeks before they flower.



Moving to one of the other bulb houses where I still grow the bulbs in (11cm) pots more *Narcissus* are starting to flower. The same *Narcissus* clones growing in the sand beds flower earlier than they do in pots, which suggests to me that they have a more steady growth with less variation in the growing medium's temperature and moisture levels.



This is one of my own unnamed *Narcissus* hybrids which while very nice I am not sure that it is sufficiently different to deserve a name.



Narcissus bulbocodium



There is a similar scene in the other bulb house looking across the (7cm) pots towards the 'U' shaped sand bed. Click the link to see the latest [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#) from the Bulb Houses.



Moving back outside to the narrow 'hot bed' at the base of the wall where various reticulate Iris are flowering - one has formed a group of several flowering stems crowded against the wall.



Over the years we have tried growing many cultivated forms and hybrids of **Iris reticulata** many flowered the first year after we got them then dwindled away however a few have persisted.

After three to five years of growth some clumps become too congested to fully appreciate the individual flowers so I need to divide them.

Following on from last week's Bulb Log – the best time to do a job is when you remember – I decided to carefully lift this group now.



Iris reticulata bulbils

While separating out the flowering bulbs I found some bulbils which I have planted in the nearby sand bed between the cobbles.



The gritty, sandy soil means I can lift and separate the bulbs out with minimal damage to the roots - that congested clump has now become seven groups or individuals to be spread out and planted back into the same bed.



Megan approves of how I have replanted the iris spreading them out to extend the planting to the left and right.



When we first set the Japanese style lantern in place I planted a small blue juniper cutting at the base of the granite column as a spot planting over the years it has spread out overgrowing the rock garden.



At various stages over the thirty plus years I have cut its growth back to try and keep it in scale but now I have decided that it no longer fits with my vision so it is coming out.



I am always looking at ways to recycle, I do it all the time in my art, and here I am going to try and bring art and horticulture together to recycle this miserable looking specimen using the ancient art of bonsai.



Now planted it into an old polystyrene trough I have roughly pruned some of the growth back and will see how it grows in the coming year.
The aim and my challenge is to establish a new compact root system which will encourage healthy foliage growth then hopefully I can further refine the shape into a bonsai with some rugged character.



The **Vaccinium nummularia** I showed last week having trimmed back one side is now undergoing another major pruning. It started out as a cutting taken from the garden and for years formed a compact shrub now it has grown substantially as seen here, centre right, and is encroaching into the bed.



Now it is trimmed back to open up more of the bed. It is my experience that this shrub does not bud freely when cut back beyond the recent growths so my long term plan will be to root more cuttings with the aim of replacing this sprawling old plant with a more compact clone of itself.



Eranthis byunsanensis flowering in a pot in an open frame.



In the garden some of the **Eranthis hyemalis** flowers are encouraged to open in the warmth of the sunshine.



Eranthis hyemalis



In a bulb bed *Galanthus* flowers are joined by *Corydalis caucasica*, *Crocus atticus*, *Eranthis*, *Leucojum*, etc.



Bulb Bed



Different forms of *Galanthus* include the group here in the centre where the inner three petals are longer than the normal.



Last image for this week more snowdrops enjoying the sunshine, click the link to walk with me around these beds [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#).