



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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Meconopsis baileyi



Gardeners are always talking about the plants we “grow” however the plants grow themselves, we have to either choose those that will grow in our conditions or make such adaptations to the habitat to allow them to grow.

All the *Meconopsis baileyi* in these pictures seeded themselves and so choose where they would grow just as they would in nature.

Most plants produce large numbers of seeds that when ripe are scattered randomly; many will fall on ‘stony ground’ but some will drop onto favourable growing conditions where they will thrive. A valuable lesson I learned early on was that a good gardener is a

gardener who discovers which plants grow well for them. Of course we all want to extend the number of plants we grow and take on some of the challenging ones but you will make life easier and your garden better if the core of your planting has plants that are easy in your conditions. Now many of you in hotter drier areas will be looking with envy at the way these *Meconopsis* seed around and grow so well here but I can assure you that I look back with equal envy at some of the plants that prefer your hotter drier conditions and that we cannot grow.

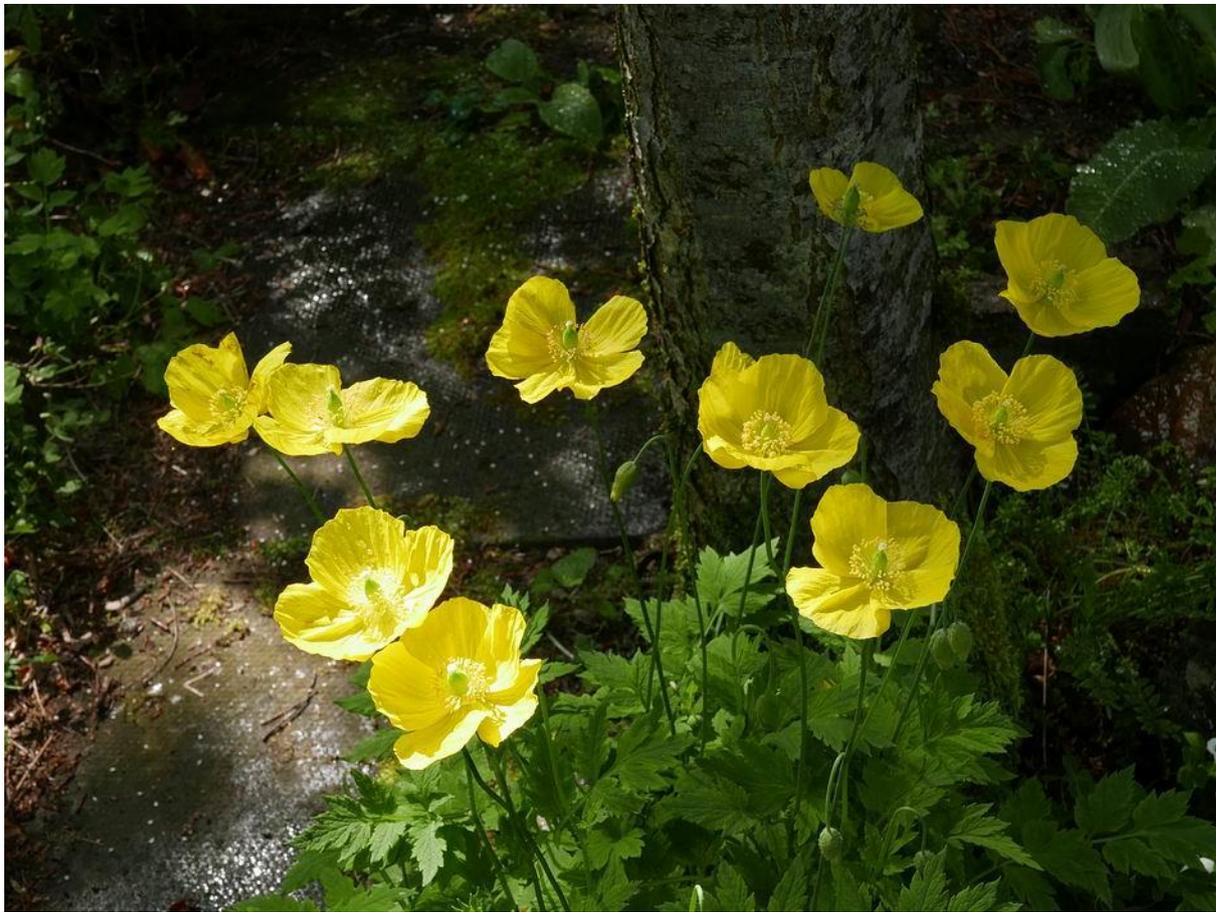


Papaver cambricum (syn. Meconopsis cambrica)

Some plants seem able to adapt to most growing conditions and *Papaver cambricum* is among those in fact it grows so well that many a gardener designates it a weed and tries to eradicate it.

The species was originally named by Carl Linnaeus in his 1753 *Species Plantarum* as *Papaver cambricum*. In 1814, Louis Viguiier separated it from *Papaver*, making it the type species of the new genus *Meconopsis*. In 2011 a molecular phylogenetic study published showed that *Meconopsis cambrica* is not related to other species of *Meconopsis*, but is instead nested within *Papaver*, suggesting that Linnaeus' original name should be restored which leaves the genus *Meconopsis* without its type species. This is a key plant in our garden, mostly the yellow form, linking the different areas and guiding the viewer's eye around – you will spot it in many of these pictures.





I generally stick to calling it *Meconopsis cambrica* the name I have always known it as and that most gardeners are familiar with. An interesting side note is that *Meconopsis baileyi* was first introduced to cultivation under that name then the taxonomists decided it should be called *Meconopsis betonicifolia* - for many years you could find both names being used, with many nurseries slow to

adapt to the new name, then just when practically everyone had changed the taxonomists decided that it is *Meconopsis baileyi* after all!



Here the yellow of the self-seeded *Meconopsis cambrica* in the foreground is picked up in the distance. We do practice some form of control by removing many of the seed heads before they shed their contents as that is easier than having to remove thousands of seedlings that we do not want but a few are always left to continue the line.

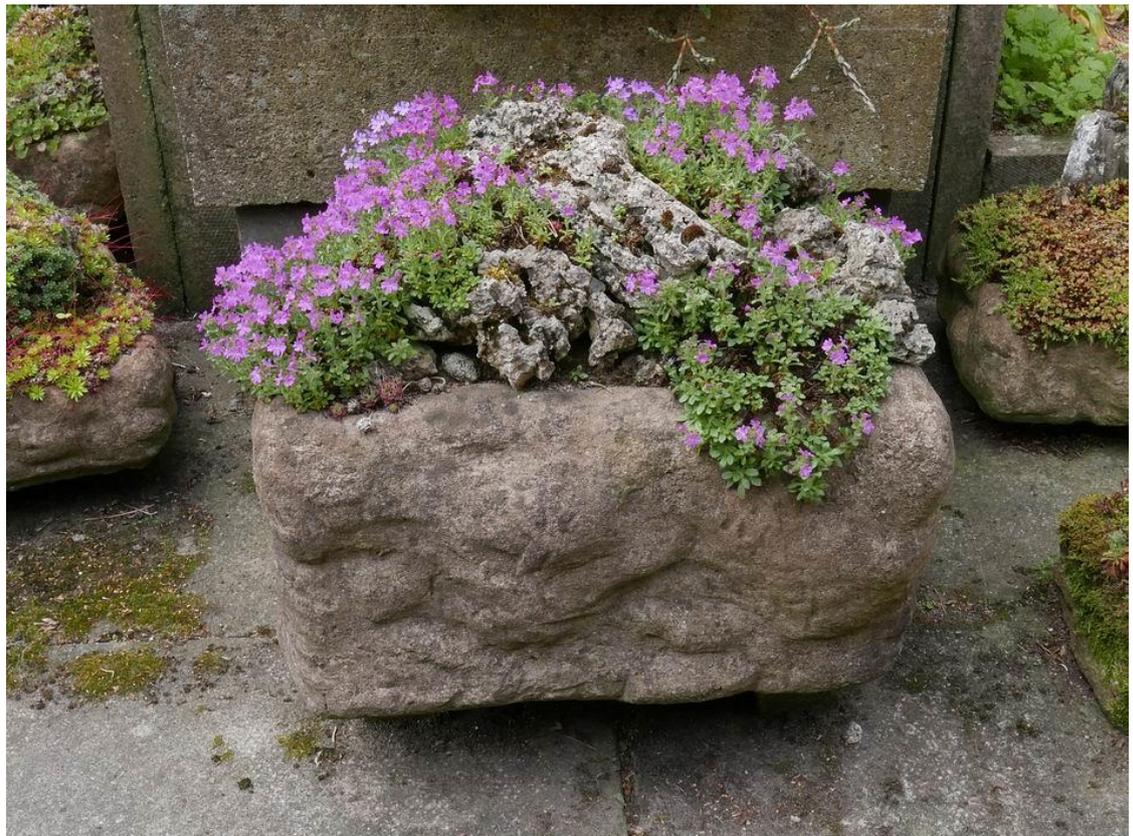


Other plants that we welcome as they seed around are the *Dactylorhiza*, all of these you can see above are the result of hybridisation and self-seeding within the garden – when the seed is ripe I often remove the stem and shake the contents over the troughs and raised beds – there will be more on these in a future *Bulb Log*.

Erinus alpinus

Erinus alpinus is another prolific seeder and for that very reason it is often shunned by gardeners – more fool them I say. When a plant is so willing to grow we should welcome it and once more should you want to control its spread then simply cut off the stems when the flowers fade to prevent the seed forming.

This is one trough that I dedicate to *Erinus alpinus* and I am relaxed when I see it seeding around adding additional colour to other troughs and beds.





The yellowing leaves are those of *Colchicum agrippinum* which here in the rock garden bed has increased to the point that I need to seriously cut down the numbers and the best time to do this is while the retreating leaves can guide me to the bulb.



I lifted the patch on the right leaving just a few bulbs in place and as a result I have a tray of bulbs to plant elsewhere in the garden.

Colchicum agrippinum



While I was digging up the bulbs I searched for the other bulbs that I knew to be there such as *Roscoea scillifolia* and *alpina* which due to the dry conditions are only just starting to grow roots.



I carefully replanted them taking the opportunity to dig in some leaf mould then gave them a good watering – they will flower in the coming weeks.



The flowers of **Paeonia delavayi** seem almost black until the light shines from behind and illuminates them.



These are two of a number of ***Paeonia veitchii* var. *woodwardii*** seedlings that have self-sown from our original seed raised plants – note the variation in the shape of the petals. Growing multiple clones of any plant close together increases the fertility and chance of getting good seed.



Paeonia veitchii* var. *woodwardii



We have only ever grown one plant of **Paeonia emodi** which in thirty plus years has never set seed.



Paeonia- a glorious gift from an Italian friend



When I am asked which gardens have influenced me most I answer nature's gardens - because I am most inspired by natural habitats.

Last Thursday I went 15 miles down the coast to [The RSPB Nature Reserve at Fowlsheugh](#) where there are hundreds of thousands of sea birds nesting on the cliffs plus there are plenty of wild flowers to inspire me.



***Armeria maritima*, *Silene uniflora* (maritima), *Silene dioica* and a Kittiwake**



Tripleurospermum maritimum, Armeria maritima and Silene maritima cling to the cliff.



Razorbills and Kittiwakes

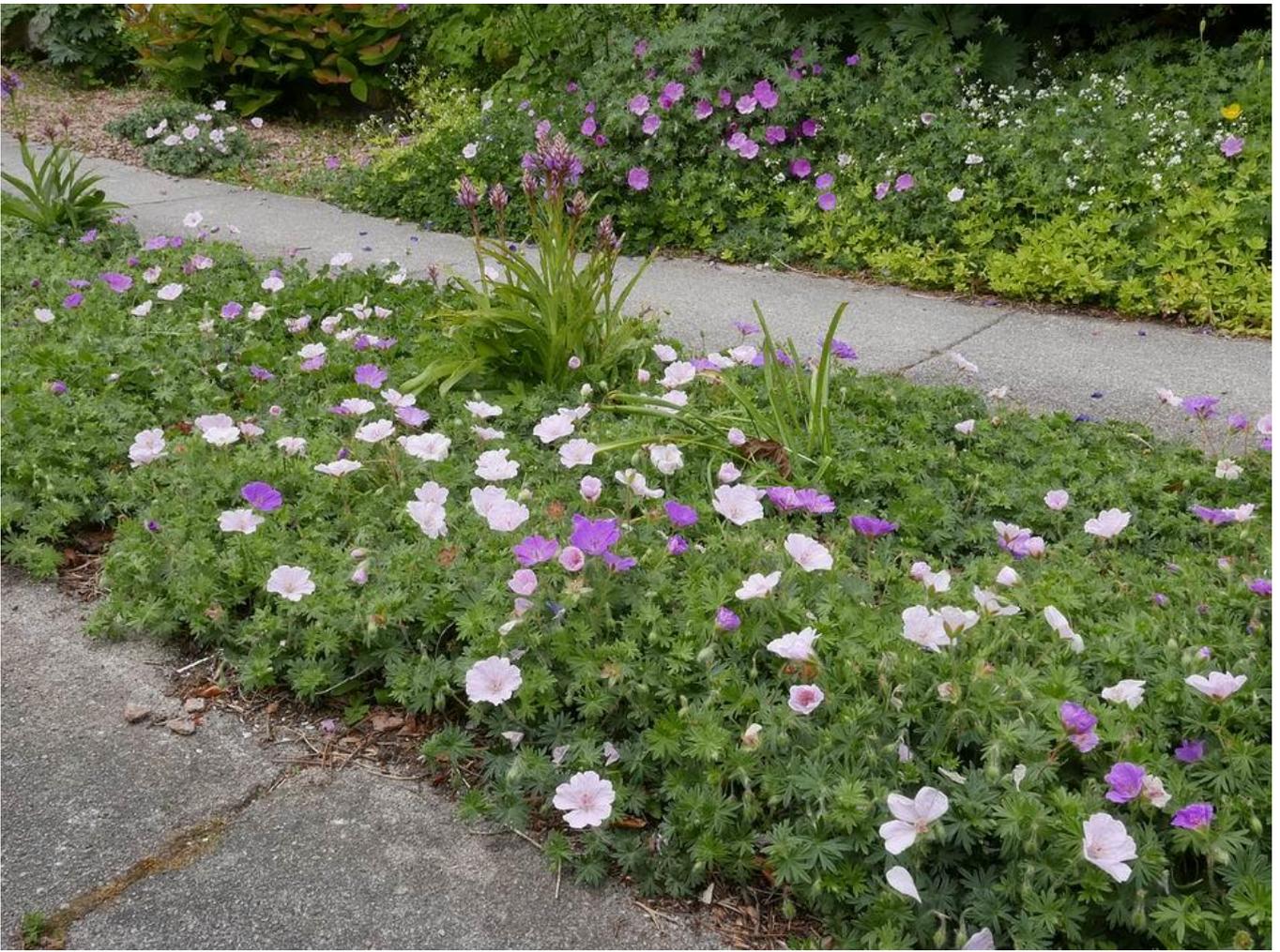
The cliffs are mostly basalt and conglomerates of old red sandstone which form a rock face with innumerable holes and ledges ideal for cliff nesting seabirds.



A visit here at this time of year utilises all your senses, the first thing you notice as you approach is the stink of all the bird droppings, (after a while you stop noticing it) then the sound of the bird call, typically that of the Kittiwake which states its own name, then the vision of these steep cliffs teeming with birds.



Among the masses of typically pink **Silene dioica** I found a few pale pink and white ones.



When you know that my inspiration is nature then you will understand our mass plantings such as these of the front drives, first the one above which is the one where I keep my wee car so all the plants have to stay low or risk being decapitated. It is a process of natural selection as only the low growing flowers stems survive to shed seed.



The other drive is only occasionally used by visitors and only then when the taller plants are not in flower such as **Phytolacca spicata**.

Drive planting

The bees love the flowers of **Phyteuma spicata** and as soon as the last remaining flowers have gone brown I remove the stems with a sideways tug to give space to the next phase of flowers in my succession planting.



In line with my theme of mixing wild Scottish flowers with those from more exotic locations here is **Cymbalaria muralis** growing with **Oxalis enneaphylla** from South America



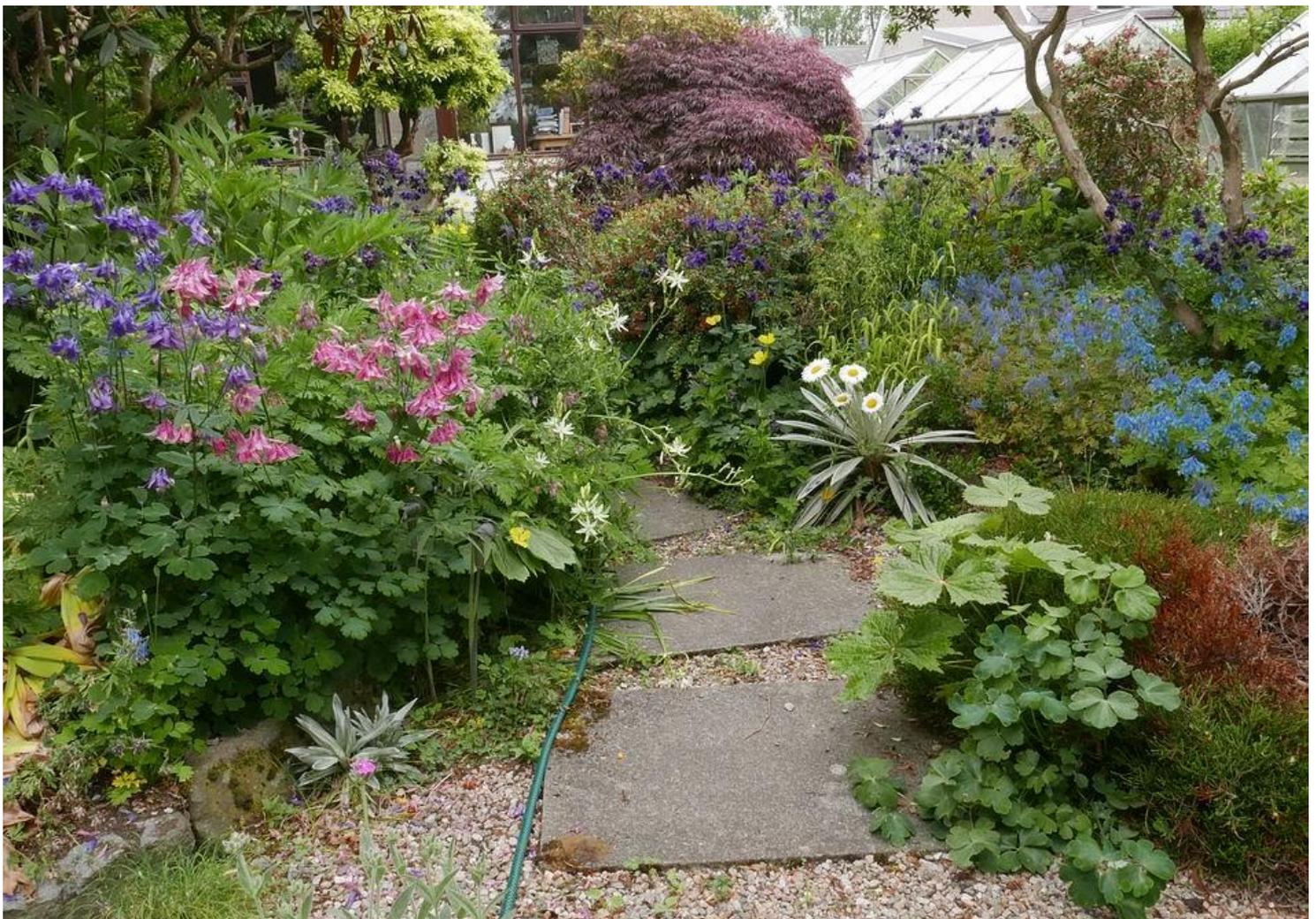
I have long wanted to grow **Linnaea borealis** (a plant that was a favourite of Carl Linnaeus, founder of the modern system of binomial nomenclature, for whom the genus was named) but only now do we have two plants flowering in the new bed I made near the pond.



They look to be establishing well and I look forward to running mats of this treasured plant.



More *Meconopsis cambrica* flower not in but beside the new bed where the *Linnaea borealis* grows, linking it in with the rest of the garden.

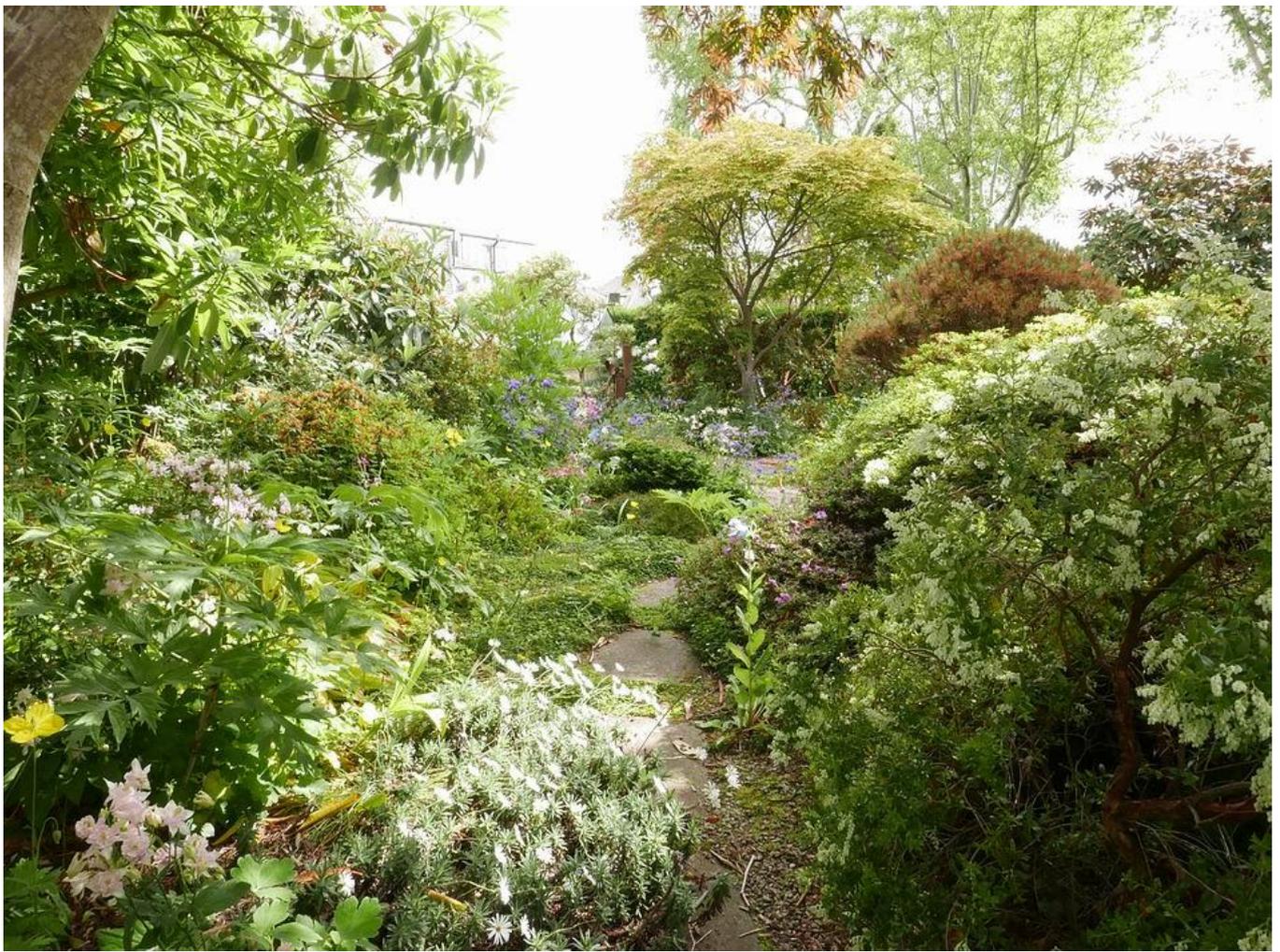


The *Aquilegia* and *Camassia leichtlinii* are also growing and seeding themselves although we do limit the number of *Aquilegia* that are allowed to seed. The hose pipe is evidence of the watering we are having to do in this most unusually long dry period of weather we are experiencing.

Globe
Alliums are
seedling
around here
and I will
allow and
perhaps help
these
Fritillaria
imperialis
seeds to fall
on fertile
ground.

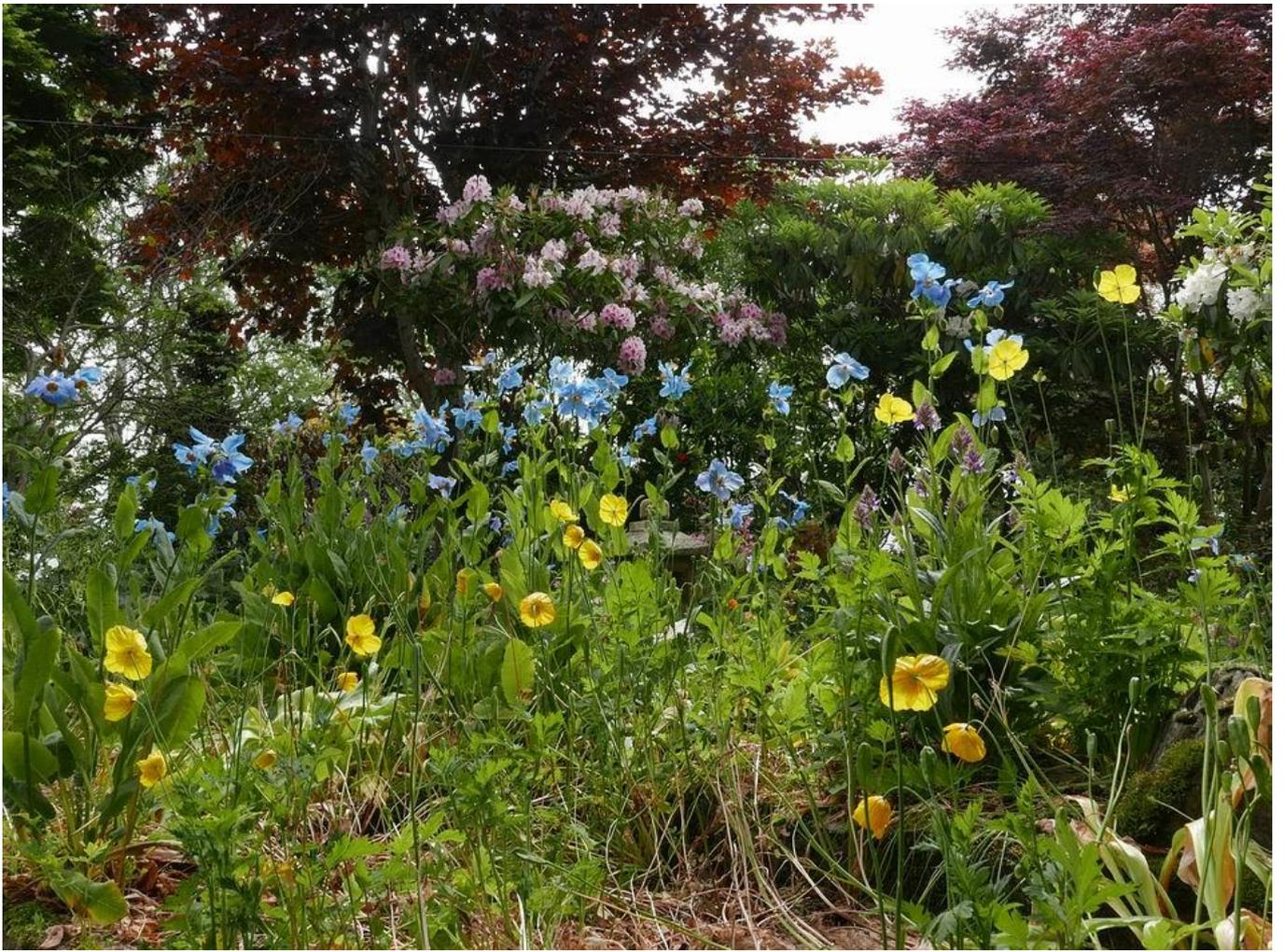


Laburnum, Acers, Betula and Sorbus are among the trees which we grow and give us immense pleasure.

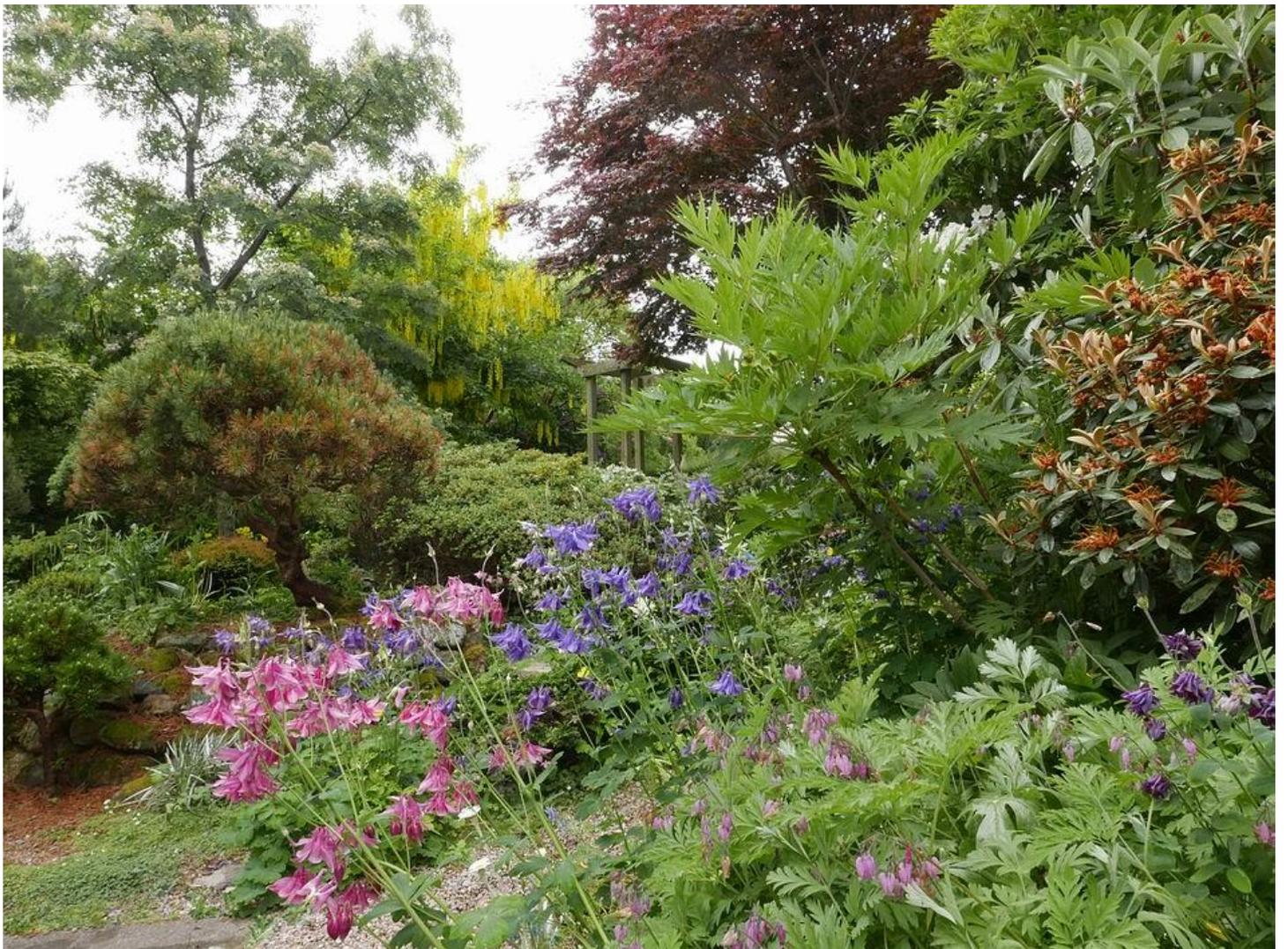


The following views from around the garden show the summer theme with dense self-perpetuating plantings.





Views





Another plant that is flowering for the first time is **Embothrium coccineum** - we got it as a tiny plant and every year I have been pruning it to form a standard with a compact head - now we can look forward to flowers.



We have grown **Crinodendron hookerianum** from Chile for many years – I first took cuttings from a friend's garden in Aberdeen where it been growing for thirty years or more so was proven hardy. This is one of two I raised from these cuttings and it was unscathed by the cold snap we had earlier in the year, the one in

the back garden was exposed to the gale force freezing winds which burnt off all the leaves and newest growth but I have taken the opportunity to cut it back and reshape it and now new growths are emerging from the older wood.



Did you notice **Clematis australis** growing through the Crinodendron? The flowers are a lime green and almost merge into the foliage however the beautiful vanilla scent gives their presence away.



Clematis australis



Meconopsis baileyi

This scene planted itself, my decision was to allow it to happen.

Finding those plants that will self-seed in your garden will give you a wonderful natural frame work on which to build and give you more time to work on those special plants that need more nurturing.