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Bulb Log Diary

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The flowering of the Hoop petticoat Narcissus continues to be the main feature and area of interest in the bulb houses. This week the cover picture is of a vigorous *Narcissus romieuxii* seedling which has formed a clump since it was planted in 2014; you can also see it in the picture above growing among many others in the 'U' shaped sand plunge bed.



By accident rather than by design I seem to have planted the other leg of the 'U' with earlier flowering and predominately cream to white forms many of which have now gone over although there are many others still in bud and yet to open. These *Narcissus* have increased so well since being planted in 2014 that they are now too congested so this summer I intend to thin them out and hopefully this time I will get a better mix of the colours across the bed.



I have one bulb house in which all the bulbs are growing in square plastic pots where I can still check the names against the labels for reference - here is a pot of a single **Narcissus romieuxii** clone.

The stems and leaves of these Narcissus always grow excessively long in our very poor winter light and it does not help that I grow them so tightly packed together resulting in intense competition for what light we get. Just click the link to compare



these sprawling stems of mixed *Narcissus romieuxii* and *Narcissus albidus* seedlings to how they can look with [Narcissus 'Craigton Clumper'](#) grown to perfection in the strong light of Central Japan under the skilful care of [SRGC Forumist, Tatsuo](#).



This seedling has resulted from our own seed collected from a pot of **Narcissus bulbocodium** - the flowers are rather pale in colour and as they were open pollinated they could have acquired some hybrid genes from the unknown pollen parent although the flower shape, robust stem and foliage type are close to that of the seed parent.



Another view of the same **Narcissus bulbocodium** seedling to show the funnel shape of the corona



This pot of **Narcissus bulbocodium** has plenty of flower buds waiting for the right conditions to open. When raising plants from seed one of the many variations you can get is a range of flowering times.



Narcissus bulbocodium



Narcissus romieuxii seedlings



Narcissus albicans from wild collected seed on the left and a pot with the original label still bearing the name we received them as **Narcissus romieuxii albidus tananicus** – both originate from naturally occurring hybrid swarms of this very promiscuous section.



Now for some growing in the more recently planted sand beds where they are still well spaced out. First these upwards facing flowers with white filaments and style suggest *Narcissus albidus* or possibly *Narcissus cantabricus*. It is hard to pick a favourite but I do like these very white ones, their beauty is only surpassed by the mixed groups as shown below.





I do favour the effect where mixed forms display together with the space to grow – inevitably as can be seen already happening the single bulbs will start to form clumps leading to overcrowding unless I intervene.



I know what to expect when I see flower buds appearing in the pots because I can read the label but here in the sand beds I have to wait in excited anticipation to see which Narcissus will be revealed from these surprise parcels.



Outside in a raised bed I remember from previous years these buds are **Narcissus cyclamineus** clumping up nicely from a single bulb planted several years ago.

While inspecting the raised bed I noticed the birds (mainly the blackbirds) have been excavating and have up-rooted a *Dicentra cucularia* bulb - the birds have a habit of digging down to bulbs and emerging shoots thankfully they do not usually do too much harm. Having said that you may remember a few weeks ago I showed and *Eranthis pinnatifida* flower shoot in this same bed – well it has disappeared completely was that a bird that pecked it off or did it provide a meal for a slug or snail?





I may never know but it is disappointing as is the fate of more of my special forms of *Eranthis pinnatifida* growing in the frames. These two precious stems have had the tops which include the leaf and flower chopped of one has disappeared completely. Without the ring of small leaves the only way these plants can photosynthesise and build towards next year's growth is through what remains of the stems.

The winter has been mild enough for snails to emerge and I found this one in a path this week. I do not mind them having a nibble on some of the larger more common plants but I am taking measures now to minimise the chance that they get at my other precious seedlings and small plants.





Eranthis pinnatifida



Also in the same frame I will need to do what I can to protect this pot of germinating *Eranthis pinnatifida* seed.



Here another precious plant flowering for the first time for us after a couple of years of growth is **Galanthus woronowii** with green markings on the outer petals. I can see the green markings even in the buds another exciting reveal to look forward to when the flowers open fully.



Depending on what our weather brings in the coming weeks these beds will start to build with colourful flowers.



The bulb bed looks a lot less bare than it did just a few weeks ago as the first wave of colour starts to emerge.



Galanthus 'Snoopy' is one of Ian Christie's plicatus selections.



There is even an adventurous *Erythronium* leaf emerging with *Eranthis hyemalis* and a clump of *Galanthus* 'Mighty Atom'



Fern, snowdrops and berries.



The two images on this page are taken from the same spot in very different light conditions, above in daylight and the version below in the gloaming of the moonlight.



Along with Ian Christie I am off to Ireland this weekend to speak at their Snowdrop Gala in Co. Carlow.....