



BULB LOG 25.....19th June 2019



Erinus alpinus and *Dactylorhiza* hybrids



The purple spikes of *Dactylorhiza* stand proud and, apart from them sharing the same raised bed, the commonality between the two nearest plants on this week's cover, *Erinus alpinus* and *Dactylorhiza* hybrids, is that they are both willing volunteers that seed themselves around our garden.

There is a great variation in the *Dactylorhiza* hybrids around the garden which is most noticeable in the markings on their leaves, the precise hue of the purple/pink flowers and the shape of the spike in which they are displayed.



Dactylorhiza hybrids

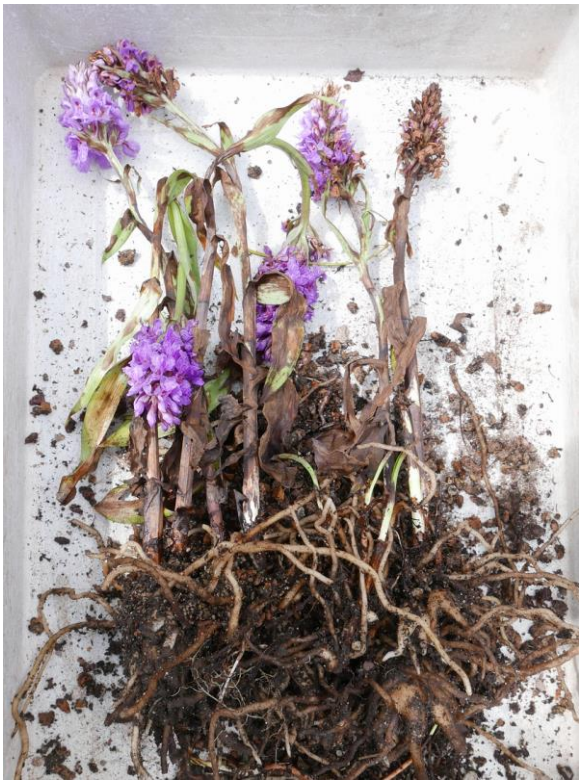


Not all the Dactylorhiza are looking healthy - for the first time in several years we see the return of a pathogen that has attacked a number of our plants. I believe that the pathogen(s) that cause this are ever present in the soil or blown in the wind and it only strikes when plants are under some form of stress. There must also be a variation in the resistance between different clones as some plants can be unaffected or to a lesser degree even though they are growing in the same small area as damaged plants. I have tried to think what the cause of the stress may be whether there is a common factor among the infected

plants but have not come to any conclusions. I can only speculate whether the stress was caused by the unusually hot dry summer last year and/or the recent unseasonal cold wet weather. One thing I have noted from previous episodes was that when I handled healthy tubers they have a covering of fine hairs and a distinct smell that reminds me of a wet horse - this is not present in those of damaged plants. One suspicion I have is that appearance and smell are from the mycorrhiza and perhaps if it was damaged by some environmental factor that leaves the plant vulnerable to the bacterial/ fungal attack. I will, as I have done previously, lift these damaged ones soon to destroy the old growth and remove the new tubers which will hopefully grow on to be healthy. Gardeners will face many such challenges some of which there is little we can do to prevent but we can take heart from the fact that there are always more successes than failures.

All but a few of the very first Dactylorhiza we introduced have self-seeded so there is a wide range of clones growing in various habitats across the garden. Some choose to grow in association with other plants such as this one that seeded into a cushion of saxifrage: note that it is perfectly healthy even though it is growing only 40cms away from the infected clump shown above.





In an attempt to understand and rescue the clump of infected *Dactylorhiza* shown on the previous page, I lifted it. One of the observations that I made was that it had started as a single seedling which over the years became a congested clump – was that a contributory factor to the attack? There are other perfectly healthy equally congested clumps in other locations.

One of the purposes of lifting the clump was to remove the new tubers that are forming at the base of the stem – this is much earlier than I would prefer to remove them if I was propagating but I want to remove them early while they are showing no signs of infection.



I now have a group of smallish but clean tubers to replant – a few back into the same spot and the rest into other areas of the garden.

I have potted the infected stems and old tubers to see if they will still go on and form another set of young tubers in the way that I propagate these plants.



Dactylorhiza hybrids

It is easy to become despondent so I remind myself that while there are many infected plants the majority are healthy and even if we lost them all there will be plenty seeds around the garden to start a new population.



Dactylorhiza hybrid

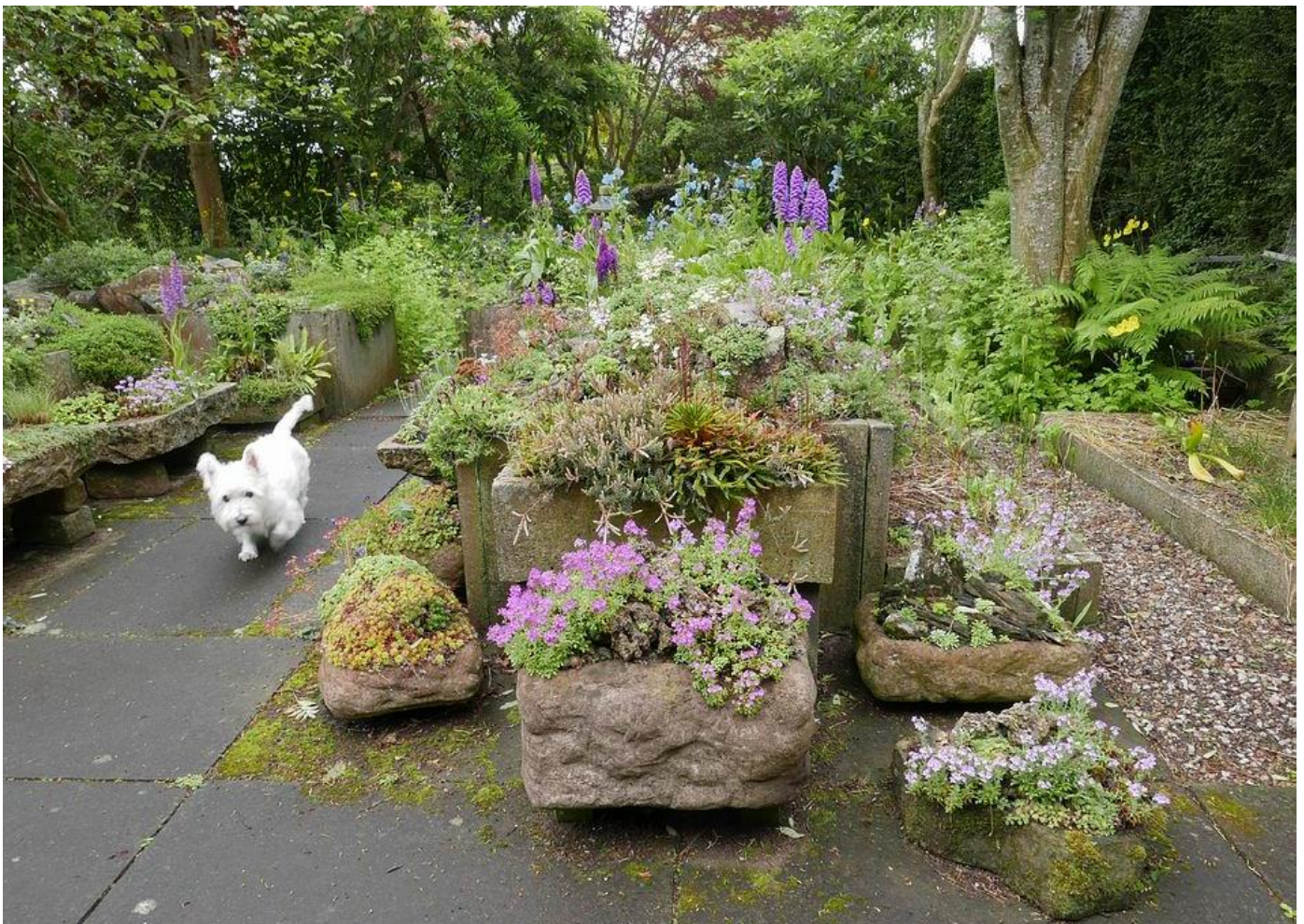


Dactylorhiza hybrids

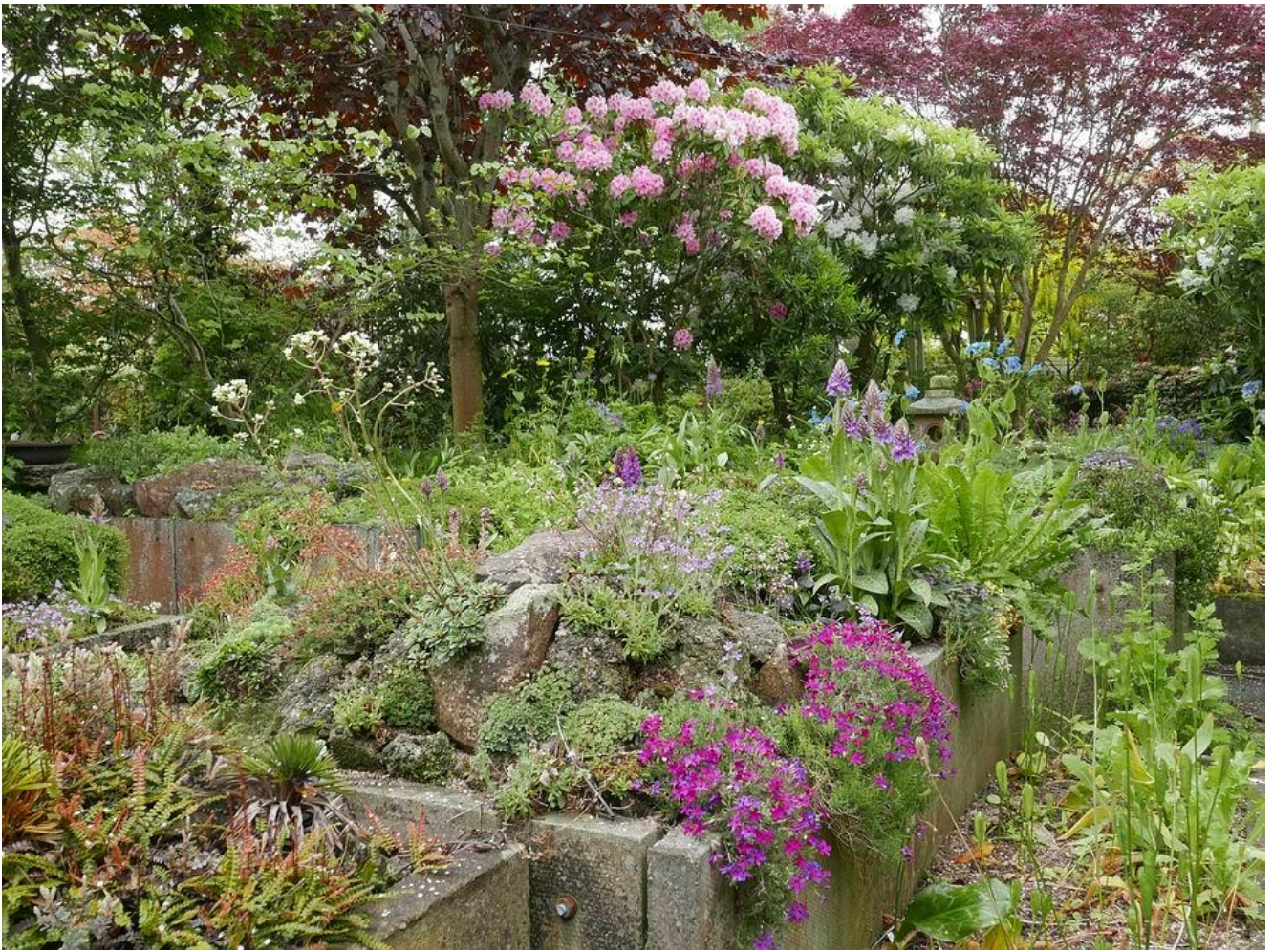
We get tremendous pleasure from the spikes of purple dactylorhiza flowers appearing across the garden and would not want to be without them so I will continue to encourage them by helping to scatter the fine seed when it is ripe.



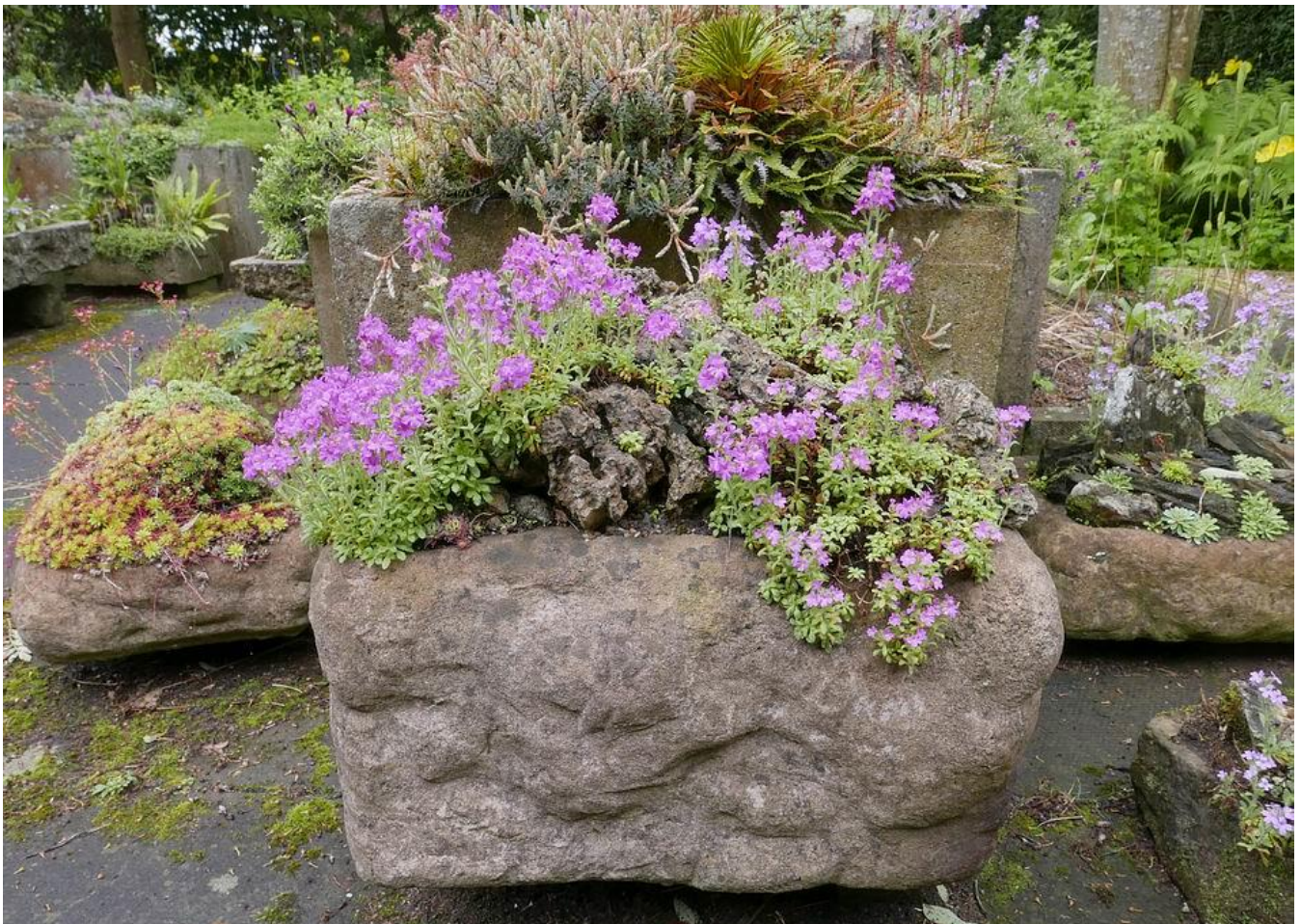
A very healthy looking clump of *Dactylorhiza* growing along with *Corydalis* 'Craigton Blue' are still not showing any colour so will extend the flowering season for many more weeks.



Molly walks by the troughs and raised slab beds where there are many *Dactylorhiza* hybrids growing.



Pinks and purples are the dominant colours in this view from the leaves of the Acers, Rhododendron flowers high above our heads down to the *Dactylorhiza*, Phlox and *Erinus alpinus*.



After I landscaped this trough with limestone rocks I simply scattered ***Erinus alpinus*** seed across the rock now I leave it to seed itself.



Part of the rock landscape in this trough had become completely overgrown by a mossy saxifrage (above) which I removed last year before replanting it with silver saxifrage cuttings leaving the *Erinus alpinus* growing in cracks on the volcanic rocks.



The pink/purple theme is repeated on a smaller scale here with a group of *Dactylorhiza* flowers, seeded into a trough, and contrasting beautifully against the fine dissected foliage of a low growing *Acer*. There are a number of self-seeding plants all around as well as in the troughs including *Papaver (Meconopsis) cambrica* and *Corydalis mairei*.



We lost our original plants of **Corydalis mairei** which I assumed were short lived but it is a prolific seeder so we still have plenty of plants seeding around as it marched itself across garden to the area by the bulb houses.



Corydalis mairei



Corydalis mairei

The flowers are relatively small with a narrow lower lip so while they are not the showiest of this genus I do enjoy the overall effect of the blue flowers on red stems and finely divided foliage



Corydalis mairei



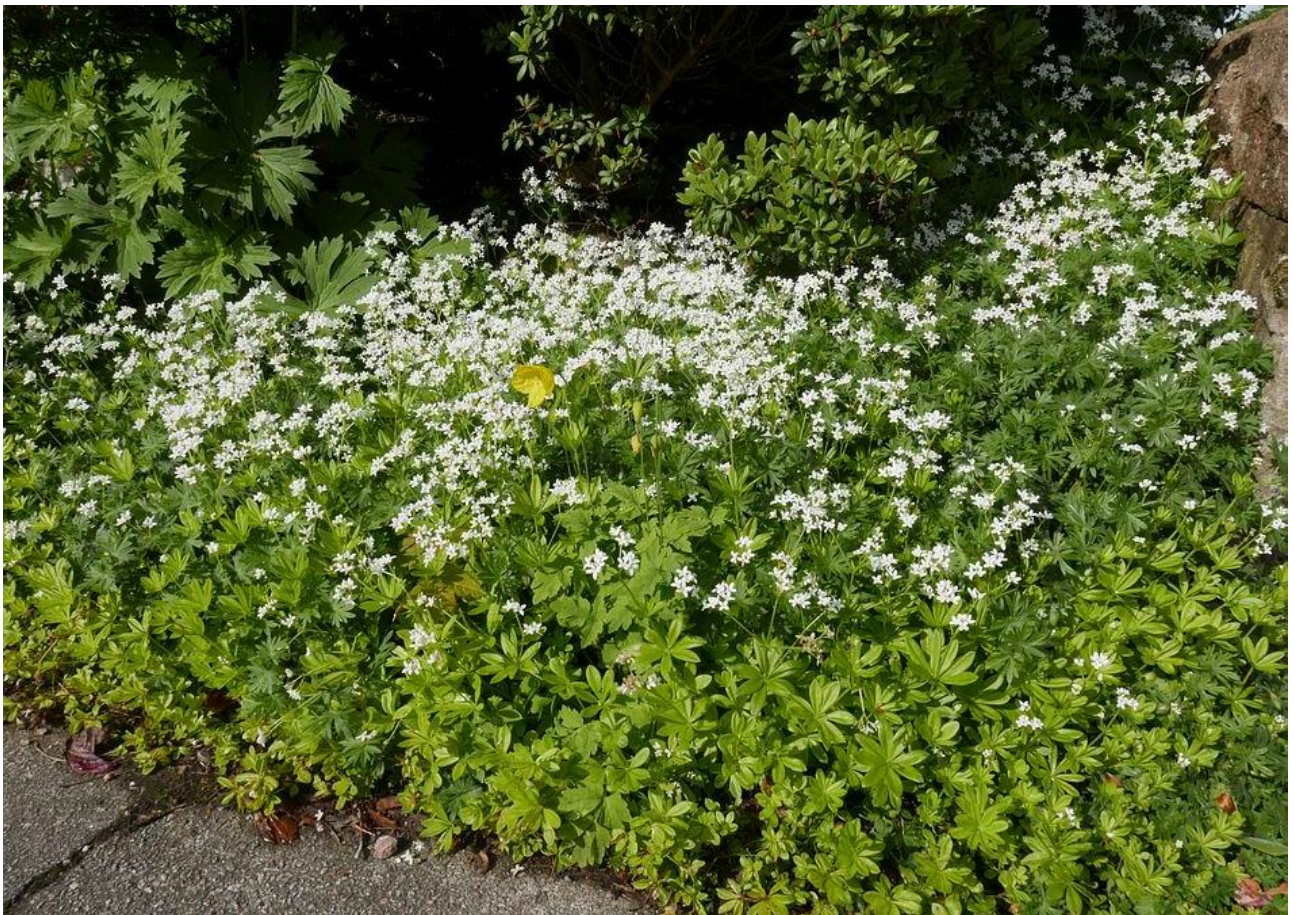
The self-seeding continues up the side path towards the sheds and the garage where even though we get wet legs walking as the growth closes onto the path after it has been raining we cannot bring ourselves to clear or thin them out.



The narrow strip between the slabs and the glasshouse is the home for our strawberry patch – all self-seeded.



Despite only having a single flower I get great pleasure from this rare Scottish native plant, **Trientalis europaea**, growing in the garden and I hope in years to come that it will establish better clumps.



We have more success in providing the ideal growing conditions for another native, **Galium oderatum**, which forms a great carpet across the front garden through which all the other plants can grow without any competition.



The mass of tiny white **Galium odoratum** flowers over the fresh green foliage gives this lovely effect.



From the tiny Galium flowers to the giant ones of the tree peony **Paeonia hybrid**



Paeonia hybrid



Paeonia hybrid



Another of the tree peonies is this **Paeonia hybrid**





Paeonia veitchii* var. *woodwardii is one of the herbaceous type which seeds around this part of the garden.



Paeonia veitchii* var. *woodwardii this variety is smaller growing than the type species.



Meconopsis baileyi



The cold wet weather is in stark contrast to the hot dry conditions we were experiencing this time last year and cool moist conditions are more suited to the growth of the Meconopsis.



Growth in the bulb bed where all the smaller bulbs flowered earlier in the year is now rampant with taller plants.



Aquilegia, Allium, Delphinium and Doronicum are among the many plants in flower.



Yellow is the dominant colour among this group of self-seeding plants in the front garden which includes *Papaver*, *Pseudofumaria* and *Ranunculus* species.



Dactylorhiza have also seeded in among the **Geranium sanguineum** and other plants in the drive way.



Having enjoyed many flowering bulbs already this year it is now the turn of ***Phyteuma spicatum*** rising up through a carpet of geranium that is the dominant flower, attracting a constant army of bees, on the other drive.



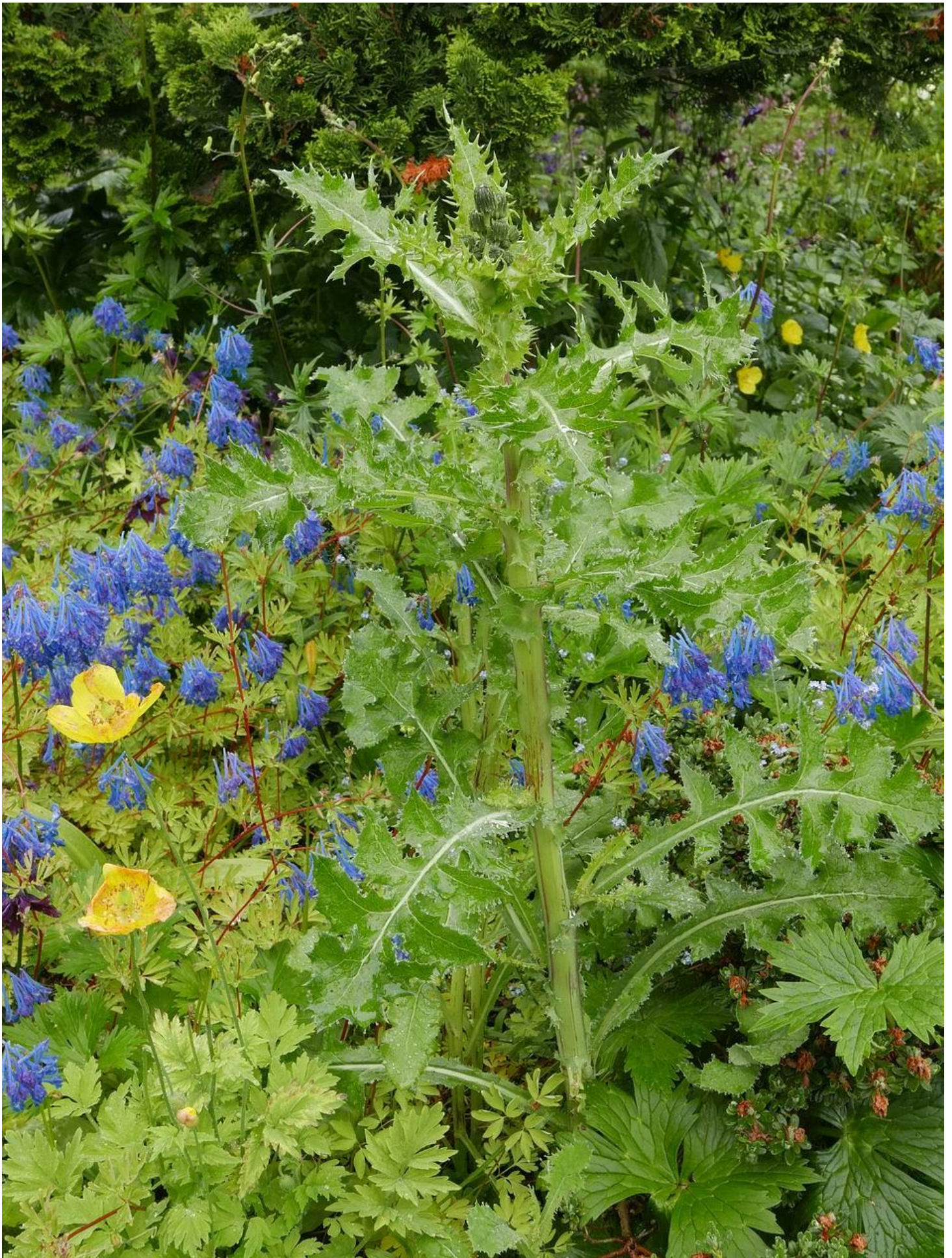
Phyteuma spicatum



As soon as the *Phyteuma spicatum* flowers go brown I will remove most of their stems to make way for the *Digitalis grandiflora* which are the next wave of taller plants to stage a display. I started all the plants growing in the drives by simply scattering seeds.



***Corydalis* 'Craigton Blue'**



Sonchus asper

There is a place for most plants in our garden where I can enjoy even those that many call weeds; such as the prickly spikes of *Sonchus asper* commonly called the Prickly Sowthistle. Although the yellow flowers are relatively small and not that impressive the stout stems and leaves bring a very architectural element to the scene. I am careful about which plants I allow to seed so I will carefully remove these flowers before they shed their seeds.....