



RHS

Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 36.....4th September 2019



Eucomis bicolor



There is only one flowering stem on this group of **Eucomis bicolor** this year; the lack of more flowers is possibly as a result of the very dry weather when it was in growth last summer. The plant may also be better off if I lift and separate the tubers out a bit to minimise the competition between them.



Eucomis autumnalis and Eucomis schijffii

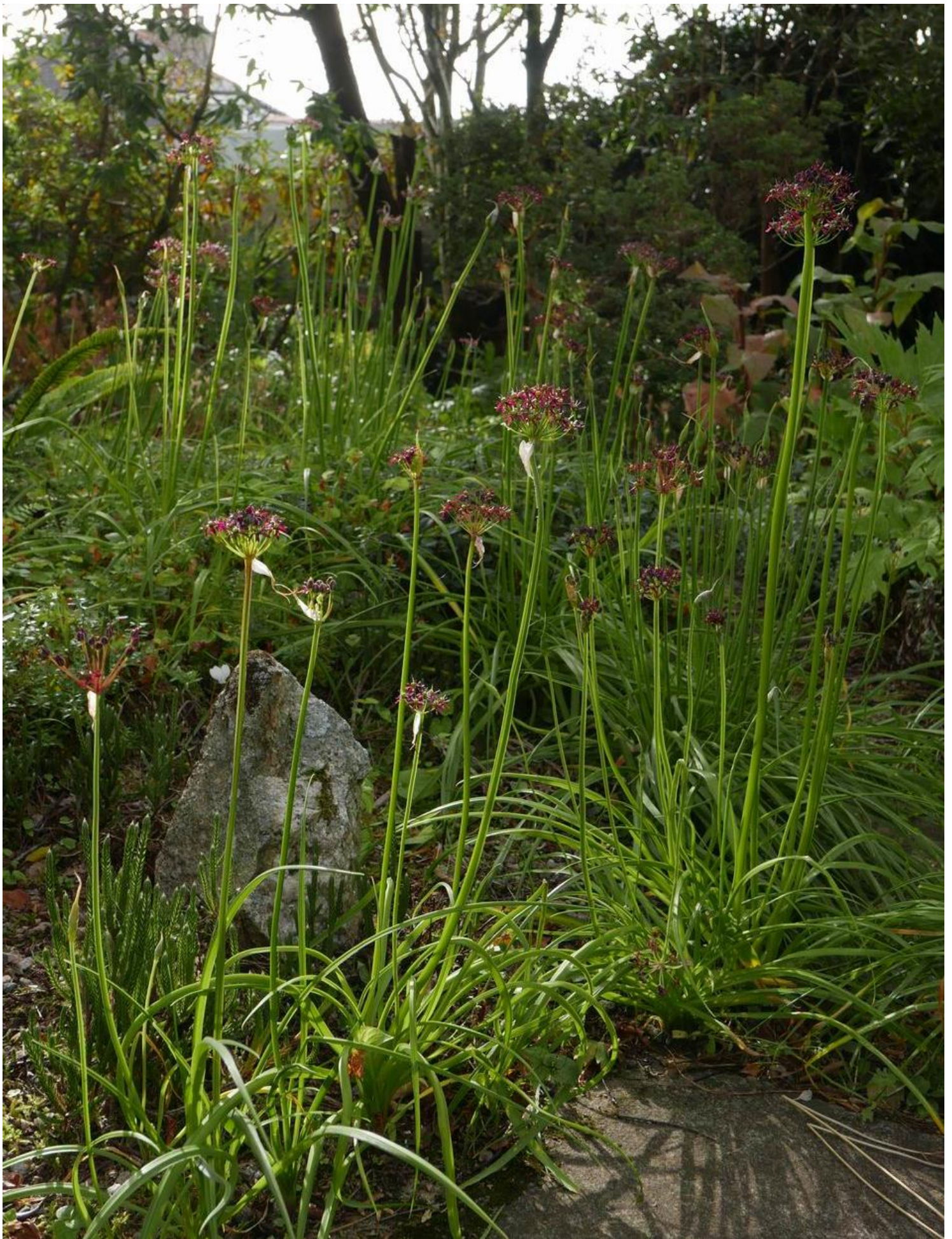
Not all of the Eucomis we grow are hardy in our garden; I have to keep these two in pots that are kept completely dry under cold glass throughout the winter. In the late spring when I see signs of a shoot I give them a good soak and place them outside where they stay until the autumn frosts start.



Matteuccia struthiopteris

We have had a more even rainfall this summer so most plants have been well supplied with water - until recently that is. We have had little substantial rain for the last few weeks and for the first time this year the garden is quite dry. The fronds on some of the ferns in the driest parts of the garden are shrivelling up. This has not prevented the **Matteuccia struthiopteris** from producing a growth of spore bearing fronds.





Allium wallichii

Most Alliums finished flowering some time ago indeed they have now retreated underground but the Allium wallichii are only just coming into flower, making them ideal plants to bring some late flowers to the garden beds.



All our plants of **Allium wallichii** grew from one packet of wild collected seed and have the same dark colour but I have seen pictures showing a range of colour forms of this species – I must try and get seed from these to introduce a wider range of colours to our garden. The original plants we raised have been allowed to seed around establishing a good colony which I help to spread by scattering the seeds around the garden.



Allium prattii, which we introduced from the same seed collecting source, is now in seed which I will scatter.



The first of September is the day for the first storm in the bulb houses – that is the day I give all the bulbs, which have been sitting dry throughout the summer, a thorough soaking.



It is important that the pots are completely soaked and as they start off completely dry this can take some time to achieve, even with a hose pipe and spray nozzle. I go round all the pots in turn flooding them to the top and leaving them to drain, which may take a few minutes after the first soaking.



After they have been left to soak for a while I go round flooding each pot again and this time round I expect each pot to drain in the time it takes me to water the next two rows if not before.



After they have been watered a good test to see if you have got the correct amount of drainage in your potting mixture is to flood the pots and watch how quickly they drain.

The pots are all watered now and waiting for the new season's growth to appear.



The precise parameters that trigger the bulbs into growth is a mystery and has always fascinated me: some start into growth before I add any water. As the flowers were produced before the bulbs went into their summer rest some, such as this *Scilla obtusifolia*, will flower before any root or leaf growth starts, while others such as the Muscari species, below, will produce leaves and roots in autumn but wait until spring to flower.



I spotted these leaves appearing last week and as leaf growth indicates the roots are also growing I watered this pot ahead of the general storm.



It is only a few weeks ago that the last of the flowers in the sand beds finished flowering but they set seed and went down quickly and I have cleared away all the remains of the old growth of they are also ready for the first storm.



As I cleared away the dried remains of previous foliage, I discovered the leaves of a **Drimia nana** in growth.



For the sand beds I follow a similar procedure giving a watering and flooding the sand then leaving it to drain before going over it again.



The water takes longer to drain in some areas than others but this is more to do with the sand being dry and resisting the penetration of the water than poor drainage.



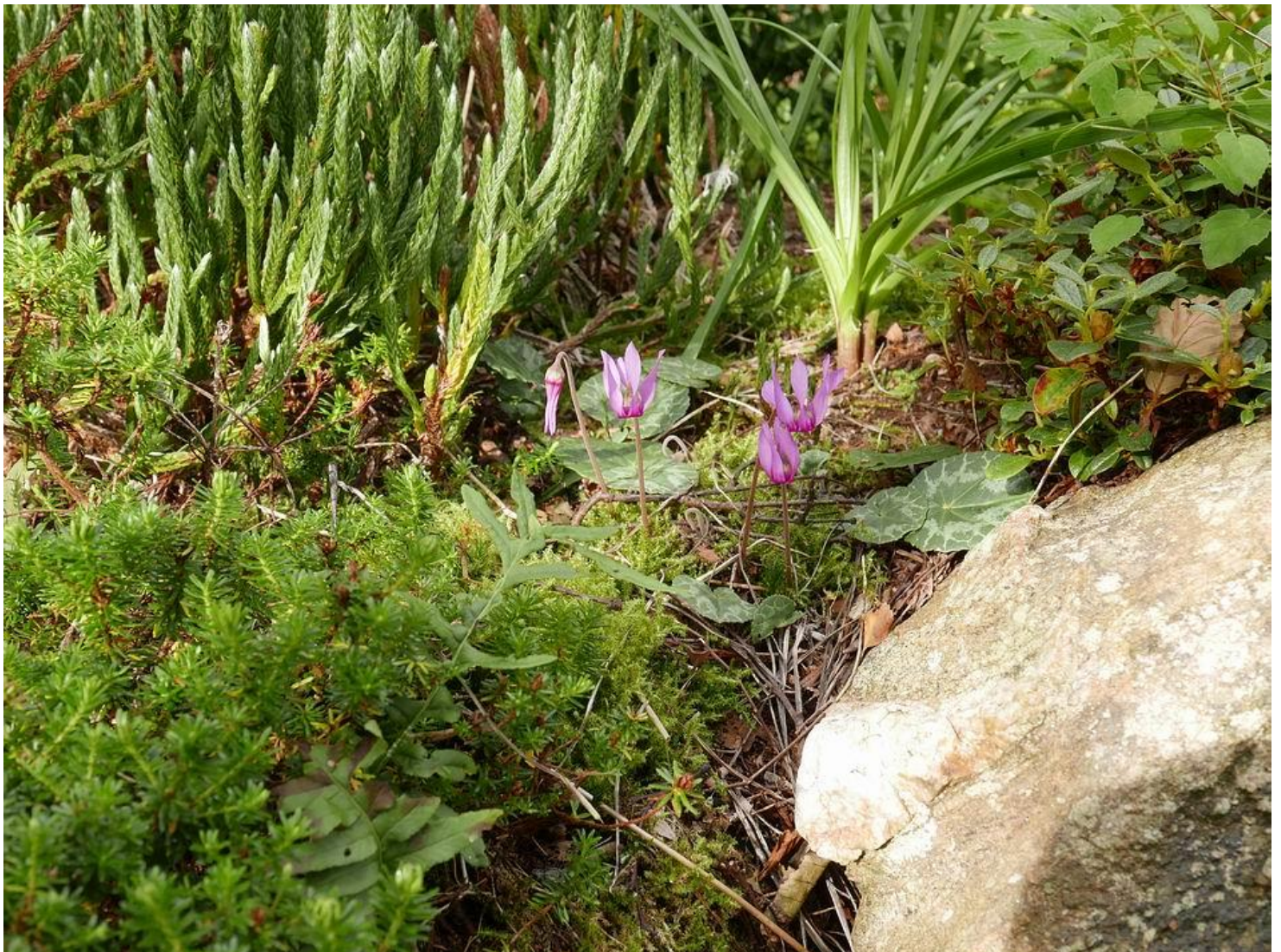
It will take some amount of water to ensure that the sand has been soaked all the way through. Even after several passes flooding the surface, I scraped back the surface, after it drained, to find some areas still completely dry. I have a drainage system that recycles the water as it drains away from the sand so I can see how long it takes for any water to drain away. I will leave the sand beds for several hours or even until the next day to allow the first soaking to penetrate the sand then I dig a few small test holes to check if it has gone all the way through and where necessary water again.



The first watering action often washes a bulb to the surface, especially small seedling bulbs, so I go round checking the sand for any and dig them back in.



I also expose one of the **Cyclamen mirabile** corms which I leave as it naturally sits near the surface.



Cyclamen purpurascens is among the ones in flower in the garden.



Cyclamen hederifolium



Mixed Colchicum cultivars



This group of *Roscoea* 'Harvington Imperial', *Codonopsis grey-wilsonii* and *Arisaema nepenthoides* will be familiar to regular readers as I have shown it a few times already but it still continues to delight me.



Veratrum fimbriatum



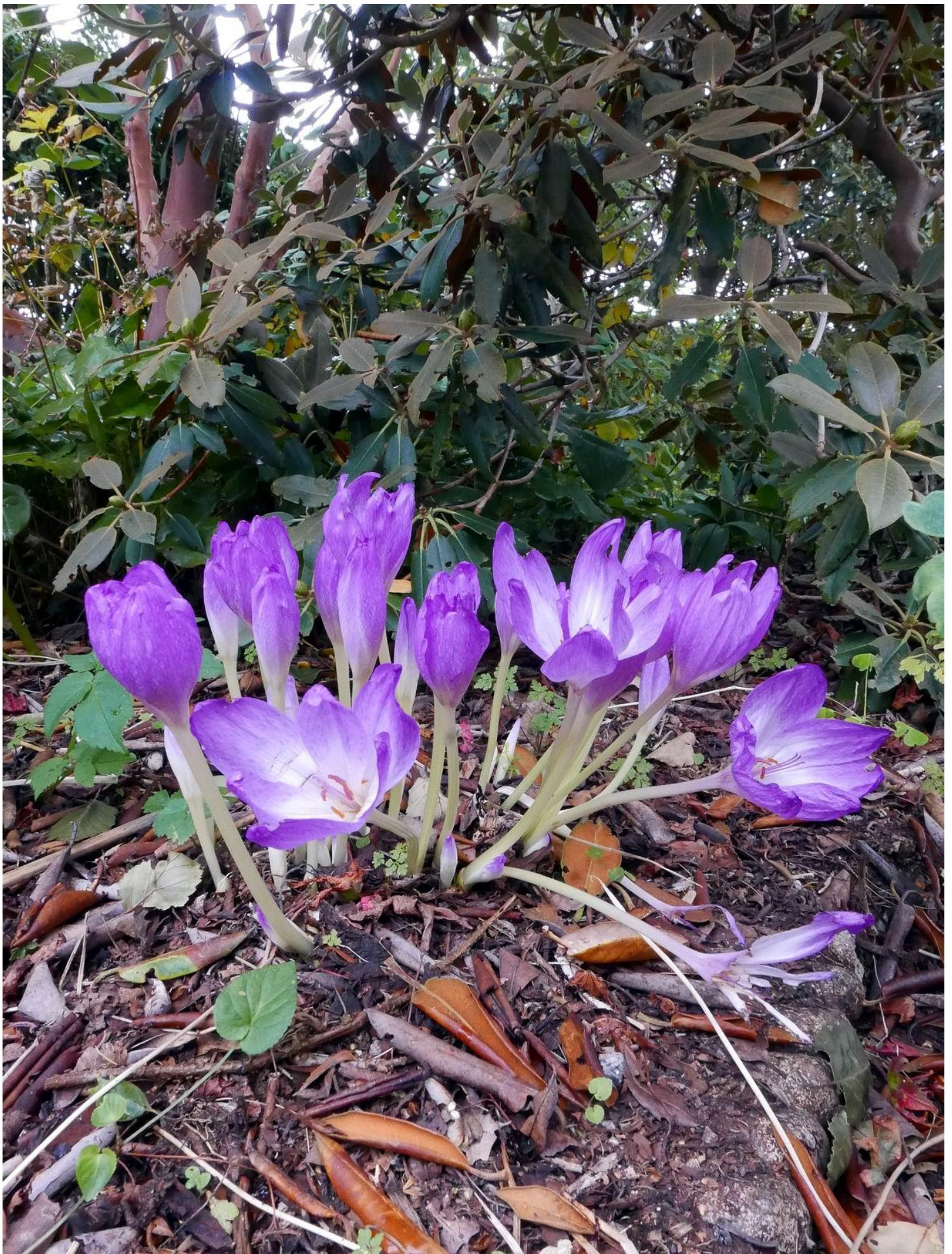
Veratrum fimbriatum

Veratrum fimbriatum is endemic to California where it grows in the North Coastal coniferous forests of Mendocino County - old hippies of my vintage may remember that county became the home to many of the 1960's singer songwriters that I still enjoy listening to, plus other plants that we grow such as *Scolopus bigelovi*.



Various *Colchicum* cultivars are pushing through in many areas of the garden as we are now in autumn.





One more colchicum to finish off this week as I head across to Inverewe garden on the West Coast to work on their rock garden with an international team of crevice garden experts – I gave more details of the project, crevice gardens and the talks we will be giving in [Bulb Log 3119](#).....