



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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Corydalis and Hepatica



The creamy white flowers of **Corydalis malkensis** combine with the red, pink and purple forms of **Corydalis solida** to surround the cool blue flowers of **Hepatica transylvanica** making a very attractive and colourful planting.

We purposefully planted this area nearest the house with these colourful early flowering species because they can be seen very easily from the windows allowing us to enjoy their display even when the weather is not conducive to venturing out.

Such an extensive display of flower colour and ground cover coming as early as this in the season is one of the joys that our style of gardening delivers.

What then is our kind of gardening?



Hepatica transylvanica

Nature informs and transforms our garden largely in the way we allow the plants to self-seed, mimicking the natural process of regeneration that happens in the wild. Choosing a compatible combination of plants such as Corydalis and Hepatica that will grow well together, without one becoming so dominant that its growth is detrimental to the others, is key to making it work. The new Hepatica leaves are only just starting to grow and by the time they get towards full size the Corydalis will have retreated underground.



It is always best to start out raising plants from seed because a group of seedlings planted out will always be more fertile, producing generations of seed than would a similar planting of a single clone which may not produce any seed at all. Once you make the start by planting out a group of mixed clones you can then leave the plants to do most of the work for themselves gradually spreading out as they seed around. To spread this colourful

spectacle across the garden I do gather some seed and scatter it in other areas to initiate the process in other beds.



There are signs of some of the other plants to come later such as these *Iris sibirica* leaves pushing up through the *Corydalis malkensis* – the *Iris* was there first and the *Corydalis* seeded in among it.



Allowing the *Corydalis solida* to seed around results in lovely mixtures highlighting the range of the colours.



Corydalis malkensis does not seem to increase from the tuber but it does make up for that by spreading around by seed. In contrast tubers of *Corydalis solida* will form clumps so it is worth watching them and when they get a bit crowded, after three to five years, it is worth lifting them as soon as the foliage collapses, and spacing them out a bit. If left alone the vigour and flowering will diminish as the tubers are in direct competition with each other.



This colourful display is part of the third wave to wash over the garden and lasts for a relatively short time however as it starts to peak then fade, the Erythroniums will take over providing the dominant colour over the coming month.



As they seed the Corydalis gradually move around searching out new ground and that is when they start to reach out beyond the beds and invade the paths. The biblical saying about seeds 'falling on stony ground' not flourishing could not be further from the truth - they are extremely successful when they fall in the gravel.



Anemone blanda, *Corydalis solida* and *Erythronium* are among the many welcome invaders of the gravel path area. By design we have paving slabs spaced out to provide a pathway all around the garden and for most of the year we have to carefully step from slab to slab, avoiding standing on the increasing number of plants growing in the gravel that surrounds the slabs.



The last of the snowdrop flowers are just starting to go over in the shaded beds as primroses join in the show.



Trillium ovatum maculosum



(Pseudo)Trillium rivale with *Erythronium dens-canis* and *Erythronium revolutum* in bud – the leaves of these different types of *Erythronium* are very easy to differentiate by the way the pattern on the leaves is displayed. .



In the shade yellow dominates with the last of the **Eranthis 'Guinea Gold'** flowers and **Erythronium tuolumnense**.



In sunny parts of the garden the first **Erythronium oregonum** flowers stand proud - mature plants regularly have two or three flowers per stem.

It is important to allow this species to seed because it increases slowly by offset taking a long time to form clumps if at all. In some ways I like that it does not form clumps because it looks more natural and it means I do not have to lift and divide it every five years.



Erythronium oregonum



You have to look inside to appreciate the beautiful markings of the **Erythronium oregonum** flowers.



The rock garden bed is largely dressed in blue provided here by **Scilla rosenii**.



Scilla rosenii



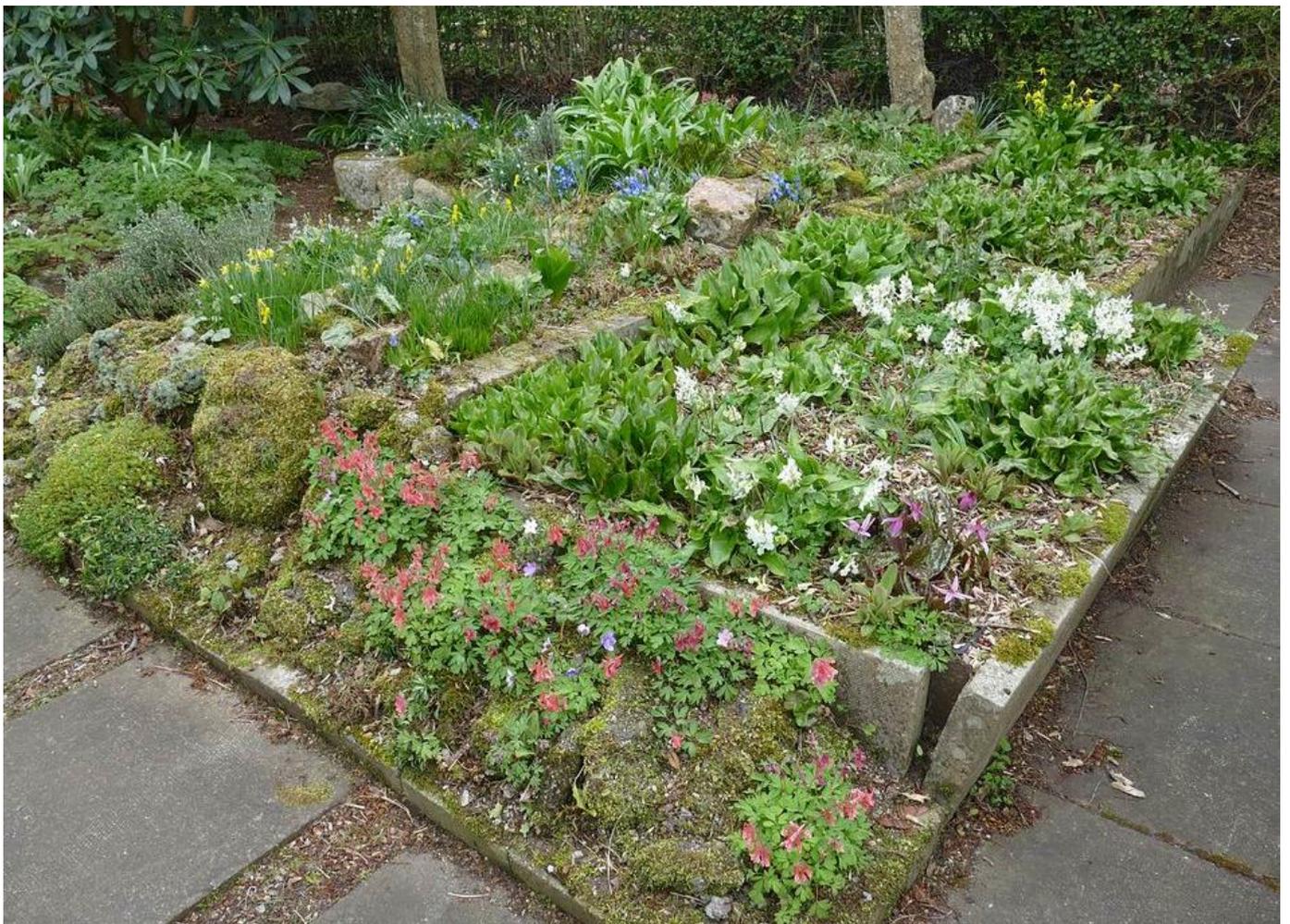
The **Chionodoxa** are closely related to *Scilla* (name changes and hybrids abound!) and these make easy garden plants.



Blue is also picked up in these flowers of **Hepatica nobilis** growing with **Corydalis solida**.



Hepatica nobilis growing with ***Corydalis solida***.



The *Hepatica* and *Corydalis* are growing in the narrow concrete landscape between the path and the raised plunge bed where I grow baskets of *Erythronium*.



A few days on from the previous picture this one shows the rate of growth in the erythronium plunge, the *Corydalis malkensis* are among the volunteers that provide colour while we are awaiting the Erythronium.





Typical of the community planting across the garden.



One of my regular tasks at this time of year is to give the bonsai some attention. Regular readers will remember that I root pruned some of them at this time last year but as they are old plants, over thirty years, they only need that type of intervention every five years. I trim the foliage now and to encourage good healthy growth give them a soak in a tray of water and liquid feed.



Next two for the trim and soak treatment. It may seem strange to feed plants that you want to stay small but we need to keep them healthy and encourage the production of new buds as close to the trunk as possible and to that end I add some Growmore fertiliser to the surface. If they grow vigorously I will trim them again later in the year.



Bonsai and troughs.



I grow a number of dwarf Salix, willows, in boxes not as bonsai but as a sources of cutting material for propagating and when I originally planted them I reused some potting compost form the erythroniums - which is very evident at this time of year as their leaves and buds appear!



Erythronium growing with dwarf willows.



Here is another of the fish box trough with a different selection of willows and erythroniums.



Saxifrage cultivars.

Spring also brings the flowering of the Saxifragas which are grown hard in our garden so they bear many scars and are unlike the perfect domes we see so beautifully displayed in pots under glass and at shows.



***Saxifraga oppositifolia* hybrid 'Theoden'**

Thank you to all my dear friends for your kind congratulations on the news that I have been awarded the VMM, Veitch Memorial Medal, by the Royal Horticultural Society, RHS. I should have been in London on Monday to receive this award but Corona got in the way as it is restricting all our lives just now.

Stop press – click the link for the latest [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#) – Erythronium seasons starts.....