



SRGC -----

Bulb Log Diary

ISSN 2514-6114

Pictures and text © Ian Young

BULB LOG 18.....29th April 2020

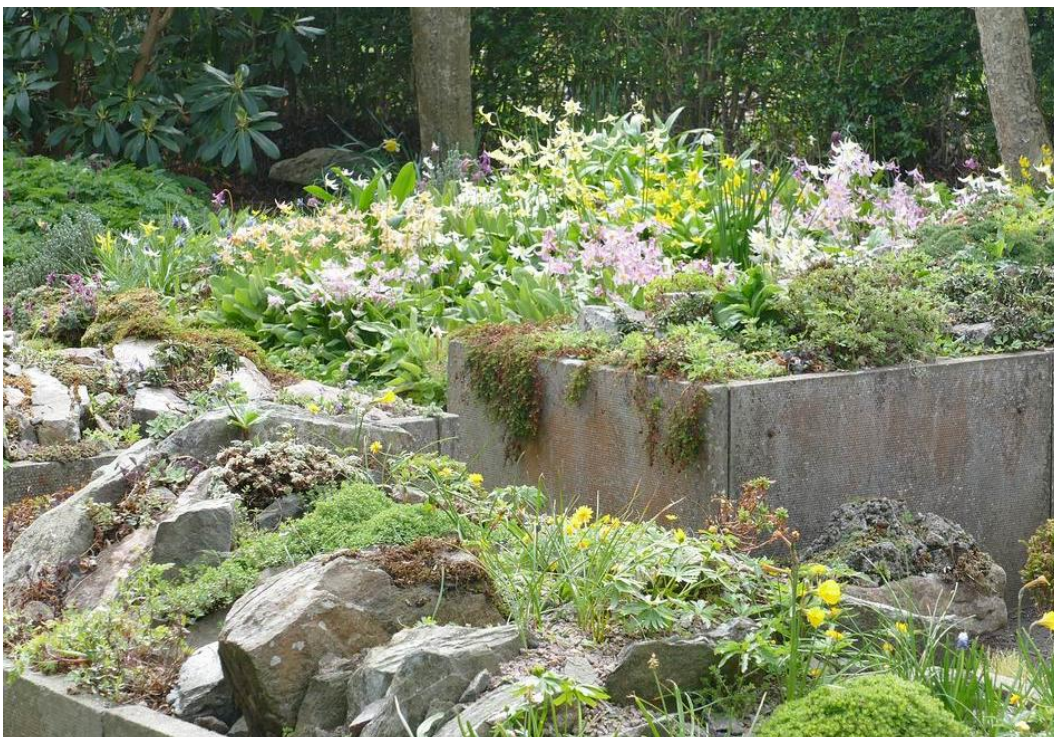




I am often asked what the peak flowering time is for the Erythronium in our garden to which I always answer any time from mid-April to mid-May. There are so many variables that can affect the flowering period but the main one is the weather – to put it in simplistic terms a warm wet period brings an early flowering and a long cold winter delays the flowering however it is never that simple. Each year there are subtle variations such as this year we have had one of the driest Aprils that I remember which has delayed the flowering of many. Some of the erythronium, especially those in the plunge beds, flowered quite quickly after I started to water them something that was repeated across the garden as the plants responded to the availability of water. No amount of watering that I can do will

penetrate the ground like regular natural rain.

Because of the relatively dry ground the flowers are not lasting quite as long as they would in a regular season where we get our monthly average rain fall.



Due to the high pressure weather system we have been enjoying long periods of sunshine soaked blue skies but a cool easterly wind coming off the sea kept the temperature low so although the dryness caused the flowers to fade quickly the low temperature prevented the plants from being stressed.



My love of Erythroniums started over 45 years ago when we bought one plant of Erythronium 'White Beauty' at Jack Drakes Inshriach Nursery and over the years we have grown every species that we could get hold of - the majority of them raised from seed. While dedicated enthusiasts like me rise to the challenge of growing and understanding every species there are plenty of forms that make good plants for regular gardeners.



Basically there are three colours; white, pink and yellow all of which are represented in garden worthy plants. In this Bulb Log I am looking at the plants from Western North America.

Erythronium 'White Beauty' is one of the most readily available and best growers which, provided the bulbs do not get too hot and dry in the summer, seems to tolerate most garden conditions. It is a form, or perhaps a hybrid, of Erythronium californicum.



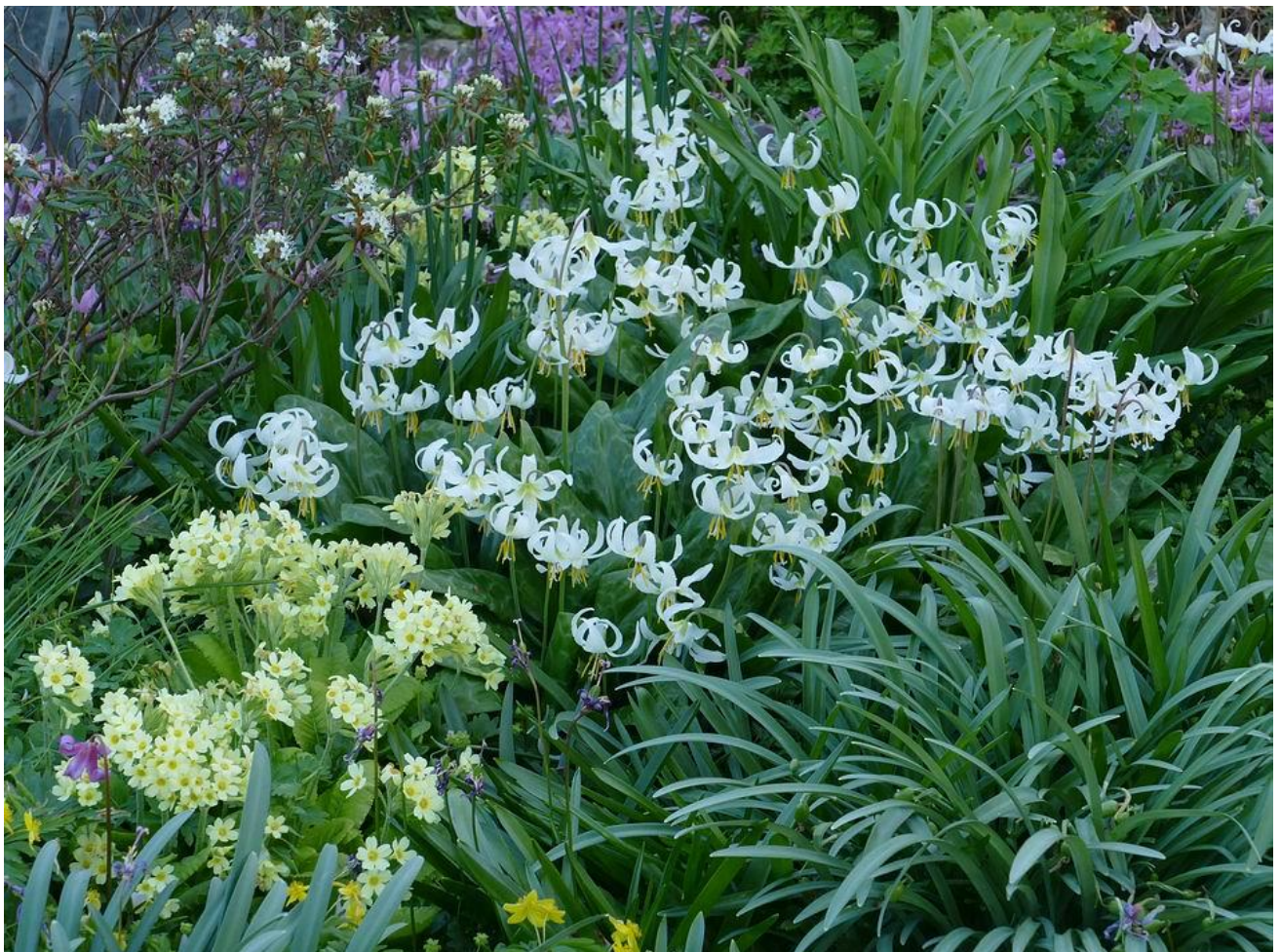
Erythronium 'White Beauty' is one of the quickest to form a clump, as can be seen above, however it also sets seed and the plants at the bottom edge of the image have seeded there.



I selected **Erythronium 'Craigton Cream'** from a group of *Erythronium helenae* seedlings and indeed the bent style, typical of that species, is present in this hybrid which like many of the hybrids bulks up relatively quickly.

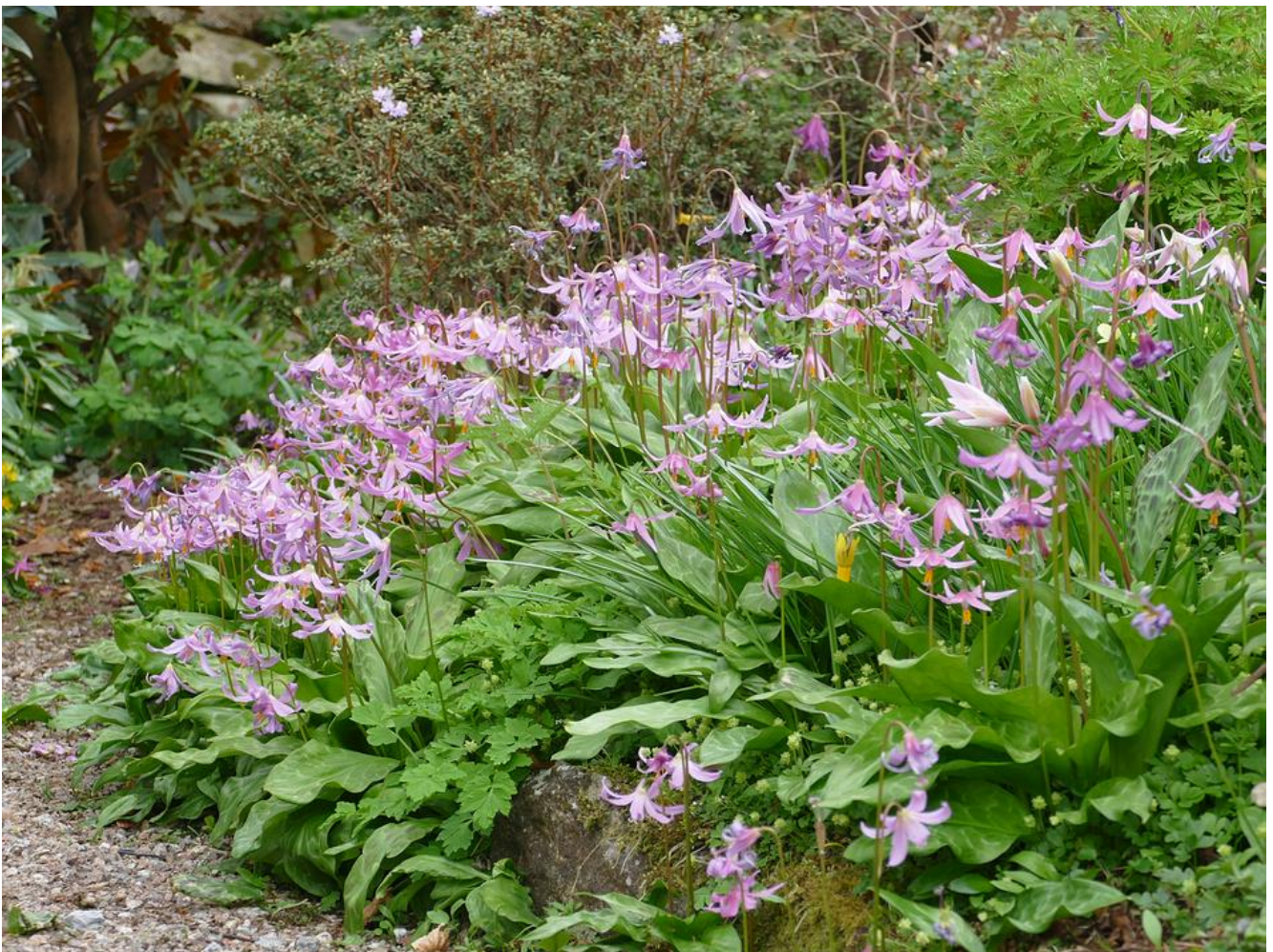


**Erythronium
'Craigton
Cream'**



Another white species, **Erythronium oregonum**, can be seen on the right of this group but the bulbs are slow to increase however it has been used as a parent for a number of hybrids the best of which in my view is **Erythronium 'Minnehaha'** which are the majority of the creamy white flowers above.

One of a number of similar white **Erythronium oregonum** hybrids seeded in our garden. There are a number of other Western North America species that are basically white and not always easy to identify when out of their native habitat but these are perhaps best left to the nerds like me to try and grow. For gardeners who want plants that grow and increase well providing colour and decoration then the plants I show and recommend here should fulfil those needs.



Pink arrives courtesy of **Erythronium revolutum** - one of the best for seeding around which it does very readily in our garden. The bulbs of many forms of *Erythronium revolutum* will increase reasonably well in the garden and it also hybridises with most of the other Western North American species.



To date I have only named one pink revolutum hybrid, **Erythronium ‘Craigton Cover Girl’**, a hybrid with ‘White Beauty’. It is a showy plant with good sized pink flowers, often up to three on a stem, and the bulbs multiply more quickly than the species - by lifting and dividing every three years you can soon have multiple plantings.



Erythronium ‘Craigton Cover Girl’



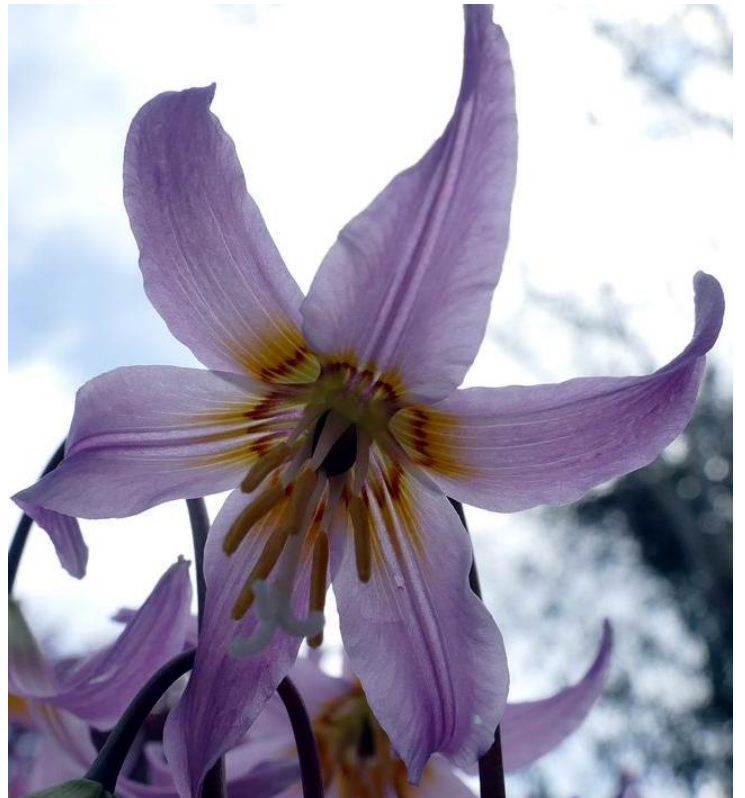
These **Erythronium 'Craigton Cover Girl'**, growing with *Corydalis 'Craigton Blue'*, were planted as single bulbs three years ago.



We have many other *Erythronium revolutum* hybrids seedlings around the garden some of which I have lifted for trialling in the plunge frames where I can assess if they are truly worthy of being named and released. The bulbs of most hybrids increase more readily than the pure species making them ideal garden plants and while they are fully fertile they tend to produce less seeds per capsule - around one third of the number found in a species.



The darker flower on the left is *Erythronium revolutum* the paler on the right is a hybrid.



***Erythronium revolutum* hybrids.**



Erythronium tuolumnense is among the largest of all and is the best yellow species for the garden - the other western yellow, *Erythronium grandiflorum* is also beautiful but not so easy to grow nor so readily available.



There are a number of hybrids from *Erythronium tuolumnense* namely '**Pagoda**' (above), 'Kondo' and 'Citronella' which are widely available and are very similar leading to them often being confused in cultivation. In my opinion none are so attractive as the species but it would appear that they grow well in most gardens. Hybrids will grow in a wider range of garden conditions than the species which have often evolved in a narrow habitat and environment.



**Erythronium
'Pagoda'**



Erythronium 'Susannah', Erythronium 'Eirene', and Erythronium tuolumnense

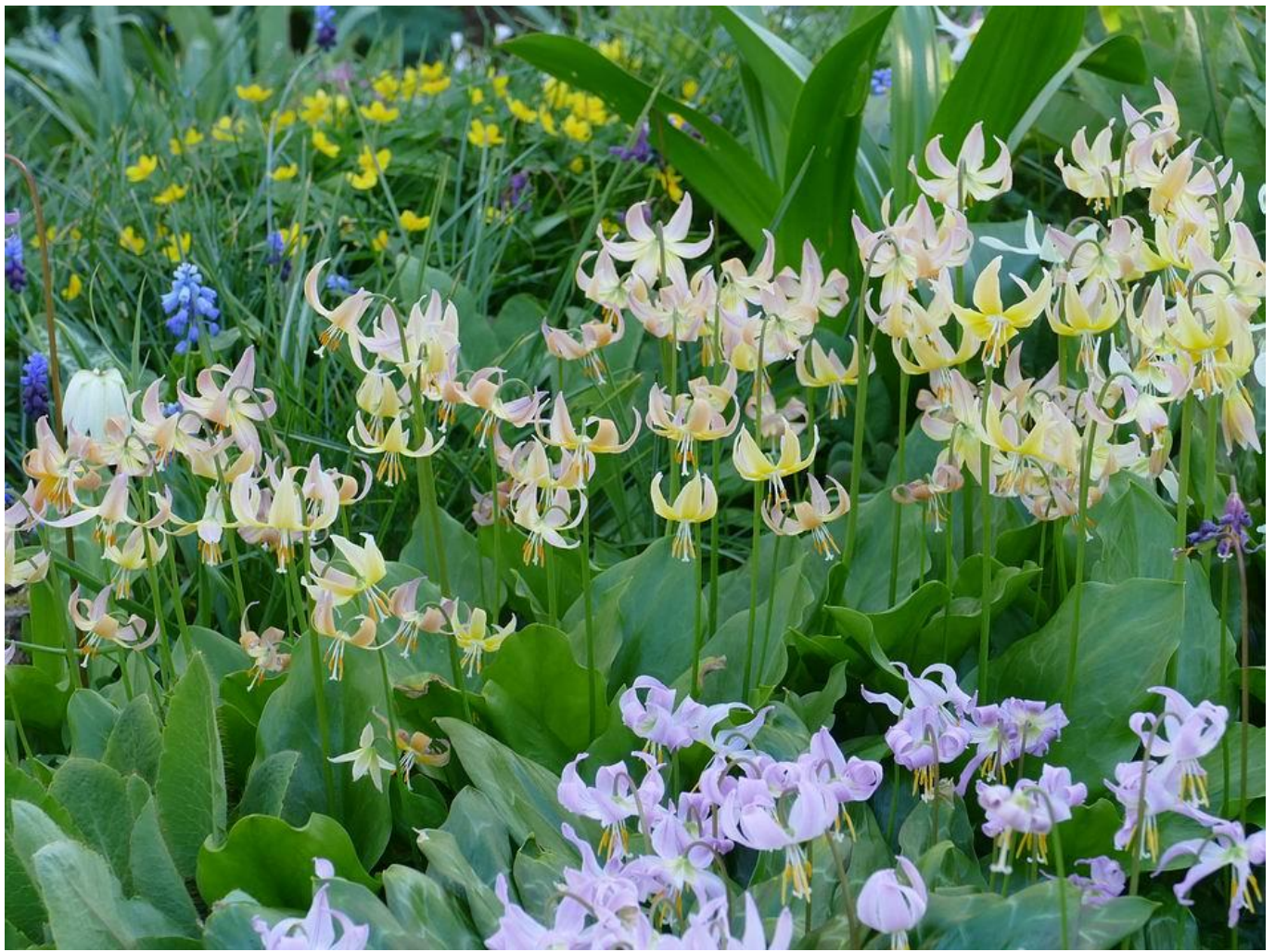


Erythronium 'Susannah' and Erythronium 'Eirene'

My favourite yellow hybrids are Erythronium 'Susannah' and Erythronium 'Eirene' which I find to be much more elegant plants than 'Pagoda' etc. They are still scarce, especially 'Eirene', but hopefully they will be bulked up and in time become more readily available.



Erythronium 'Susannah'



Erythronium 'Joanna'

Erythronium 'Joanna' is a cross between the yellow flowered Erythronium tuolumnense and pink Erythronium revolutum. So often such crosses between pink and yellow result in muddy coloured offspring but this is not the case with Erythronium 'Joanna' which combines these two colours together to produce a clean, free flowering plant with flowers that have a yellow face with a pink reverse that changes colours as the flowers age.





Erythronium 'Joanna' is a good clump former.



Erythronium 'Minnehaha'



Erythronium hendersonii

Forms of *Erythronium hendersonii* are sometimes available but a lot of the fine plants that I see in big clumps are in my view hybrids of this species. I find the many bulbs that I have raised from wild collected seed are slow to increase however we have a number of hybrids involving *Erythronium hendersonii* and they do form clumps.



Erythronium hendersonii



Erythronium hendersonii hybrid

One sign of hybridisation within *Erythronium hendersonii* is the presence of yellow in the flower, something that I have not seen in the true species. The species flower, left, can have pink, white and deep blackcurrant colour the only yellow may be in the pollen the colour of which is variable. Hybrids often have yellow as in the halo around the purple zone of the hybrid on the right which also has a significantly longer style than found in the species.



Erythronium revolutum are among the many bulbous plants growing in our drive that we introduced by simply scattered seed then as the plants reach maturity they are left to self-seed forming colonies.



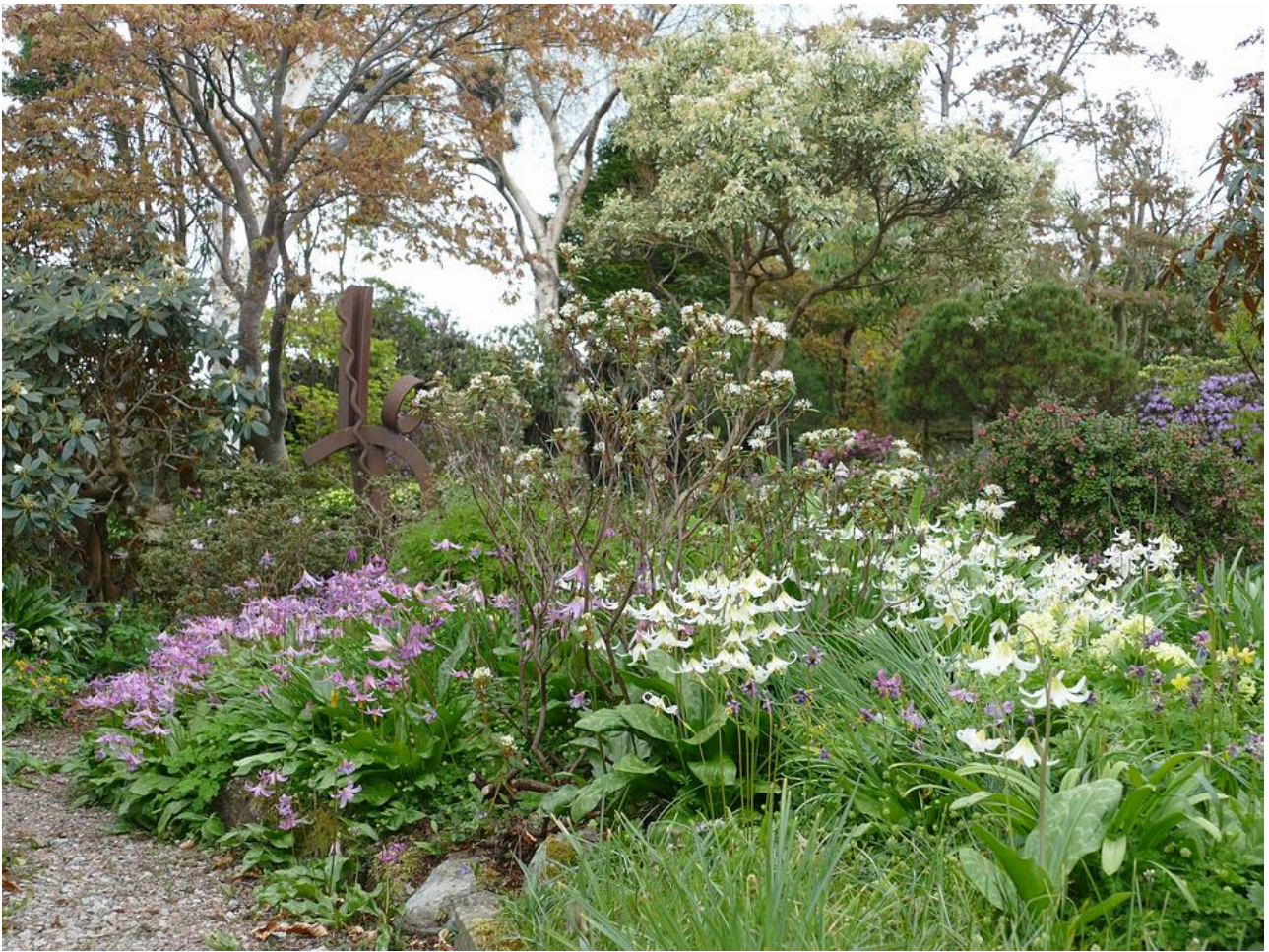
Fritillaria meleagris and ***Erythronium revolutum*** seeding around in the drive.



Combinations of the most commonly available **Erythronium tuolumnense** and 'White Beauty' growing happily under large rhododendrons in our north facing front garden



Garden view with erythroniums.



Provided your garden is not too hot and dry you should be able to grow most of these plants and enjoy the three main colours of Erythronium, white, yellow and pink. To read more on the hybrids click this link [Erythronium Hybrids](#) or to download my 278p fully illustrated book on Erythroniums in Cultivation click here -[Erythroniums in Cultivation](#) and here to enjoy my latest [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement – walking with erythroniums](#).....