



Bulb Log Diary

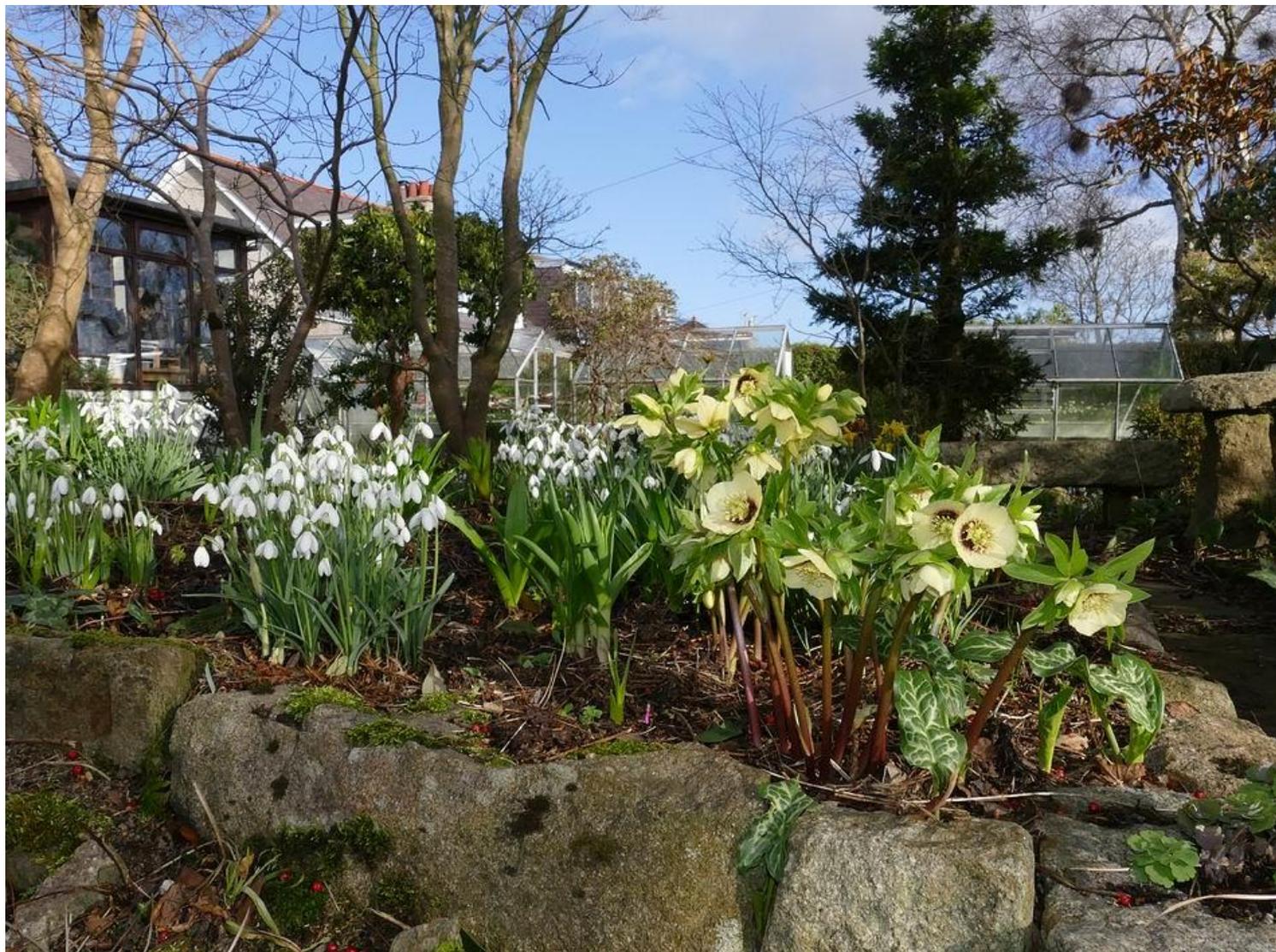
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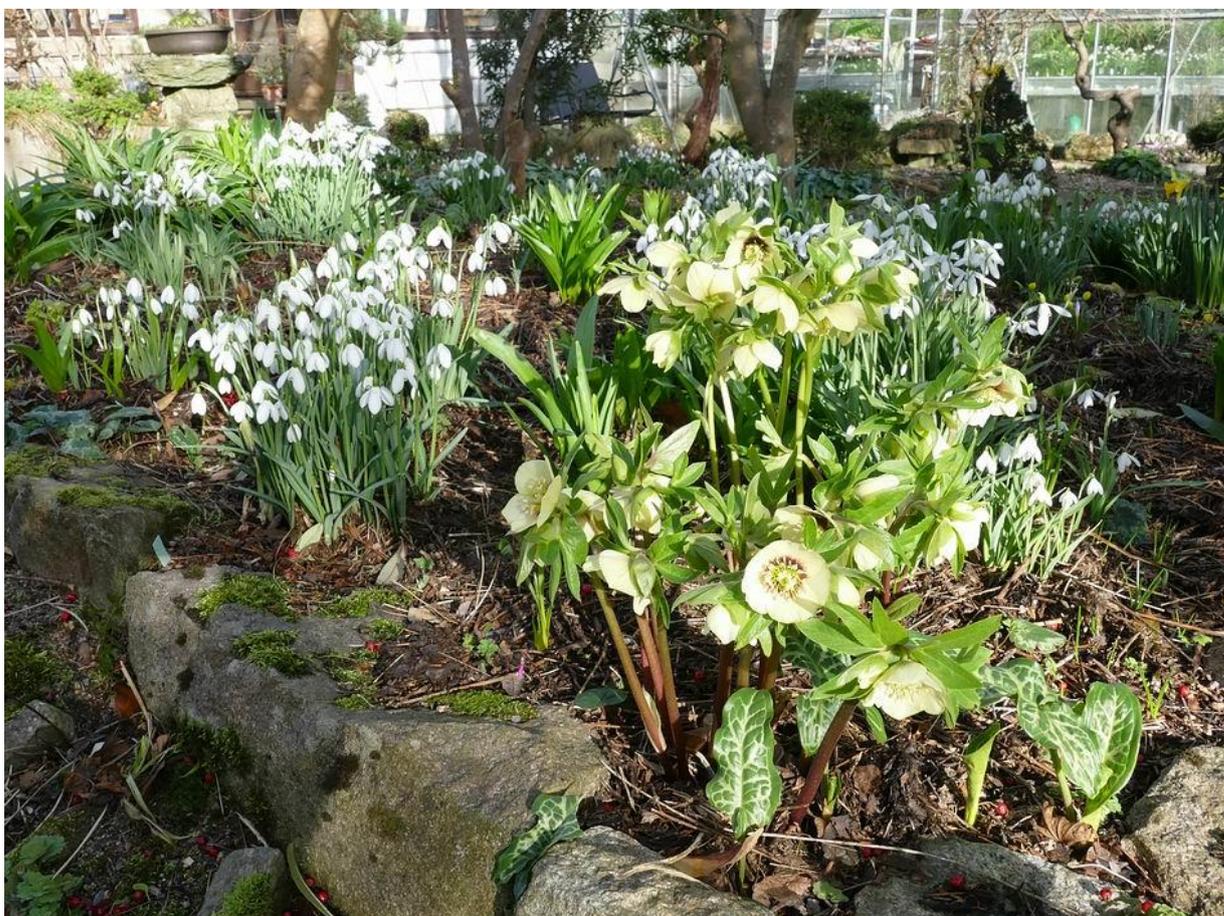
BULB LOG 09.....26th February 2020



Helleborus x 'Eric Smithii'



Hellebores are another of the essential early flowering plants which add colour to the winter garden.



Hellebores come in a wide variety of species with even more cultivars to add to the selection. There are some wonderful named forms available, however, in keeping with our garden philosophy, we are happy to let them seed around. In recent years I have collected some of the seed to prevent the naturalising community from becoming overly congested.



Hellebore and Hamamelis

When growing in Scotland or other northern areas with a cool climate hellebores do not need to be planted in shade they will grow well in both full exposure and deep shade.

The specimen above is one of a number of hellebores that are growing in permanent shade on the north side of a wall and underneath trees and shrubs. The woody subjects include Rhododendron, Betula and Hamamelis, another of those great late winter flowering plants that bring colourful flowers to our garden.



Hamamelis



Hellebore flowers peeking out over last year's leaves -I will soon remove these to allow the new season's growth to emerge unchallenged.



Helleborus x 'Eric Smithii'



Some of the dark flowering hellebore species and hybrids are also seeding around in the garden and I must admit to enjoying seeing them appearing as single stems similar to how they are seen in the wild rather than the big clumps we are familiar with when they are grown in gardens.





The bulb houses provide our flowering interest for much of the winter period but at this precise moment in time our attention is equally divided between the ever increasing number of flowers in the garden as well as those continuing to open under the protection of the bulb houses, where the Narcissus are dominant but not the only genus flowering.



Narcissus bulbocodium



Narcissus and Galanthus growing in pots.



Galanthus 'E. A. Bowles'

I have expressed my opinion on the prolific number of named snowdrops however I do admit to a fondness on keeping some with particular relevance to me in pots. These are ones named for some of my plant heroes, the people who have inspired and influenced me starting with 'E. A. Bowles' whose writings I continually refer to for inspiration.



Galanthus 'Brian Mathew'

It was the books on bulbs written by Brain Mathew then the friendship of the great man himself that further encouraged and inspired my journey into the world of bulbs.



Galanthus 'Kath Dryden'

Kath Dryden also started out as a distant hero, living at the other end of the country, before becoming a close friend and although we did not meet up very often we corresponded by letter, in those days, as well as regular phone calls to share our growing experiences.



Last but not least **Galanthus 'Maggi Young'** the great woman behind me.



Narcissus bulbocodium seedling



Narcissus romieuxii



In this Bulb House all the bulbs are growing in pots.



In contrast all the bulbs in this Bulb house are growing directly in the sand – I simply converted the plunges from pots by increasing the depth of the sand.



Narcissus bulbocodium seedlings



Narcissus bulbocodium seedlings





Narcissus albidus



Narcissus and Crocus



Narcissus and Crocus growing in the sand bed.





I must not allow the mass flowering inside and out distract me from watering the bubs under glass. Unlike the rain that has covered much of the country we have enjoyed some long periods of sunshine recently so the bulbs will be using a lot of water as they transpire and grow – that needs to be replaced.



With the outside water still turned off for the winter I have to carry watering cans back and forward from the kitchen. Each of the 1800 x 600 sand plunges takes three cans of water while I use four to water the same sized plunge of pots. Any surplus water drains through my capture system and is recycled.



The action of watering the sand beds washes the fine grains into pools on the surface if left these would form an impervious crust preventing aeration and hindering future water absorption.



Within a few days of watering I always cultivate the sand by roughing up the surface with a fine point taking care not to harm any of the established or emerging growth. Although it takes up time I enjoy this process because I have to carefully observe every centimetre of the surface and often find seedlings or the first signs of a new shoot.



Narcissus flowering inside with Eranthis and Galanthus outside.



Moving back out of the Bulb Houses there is plenty to see in the garden including our small naturalising colony of **Cyclamen coum**, growing along with many other bulbs, in a moss covered sand bed.



I am always reluctant to cut off the fronds or leaves of those plants such as **Asplenium scolopendrium** that give us interest through the winter. However with signs that the Hepatica and Corydalis also growing in this narrow rocky bed are emerging it is time to remove these old growths.





All these **Asplenium scolopendrium** are self-sown and we have to decide if they get to stay where they grow or need to be removed. In this spot the Saxifrages are also self-sowing so I decide to leave the ferns but have removed the old fronds to allow the saxifrage full light for its early growth. Removing the old fronds from the ferns or the old leaves from hellebores, hepatica etc. will encourage the new season's growth and I have found the reverse is true that leaving the old growths on will

inhibit the new growths.



With the fern fronds removed the saxifrage can grow freely then be shaded later in the season by the new ones.



Erythronium caucasicum

It has been very difficult to take pictures of the first of the *Erythronium caucasicum* flowers because of the strong and persistent winds.



Erythronium caucasicum



I will return to the beautiful flowers of the hellebores for the last two pictures of this week.



Two self-sown Helleborus seedlings growing side by side.....