



BULB LOG 04.....22nd January 2020



Eranthis pinnatifida



Eranthis pinnatifida
I make no apologies for sharing more pictures of *Eranthis pinnatifida*. I cannot get enough of this plant in all senses of that phrase. It is one of the very first to produce its flowers in a new year when I take every opportunity, during its short flowering period, to enjoy their beauty.

This week's cover shows a pink form I raised from seed but despite my best efforts I cannot capture the delicate pink colour with the camera however you can see the darker purple/green in the stems and leaves. Every time I show this plant I am asked where it can be acquired and perhaps the biggest challenge in growing this plant is getting hold of it in the first place. The internet makes it much easier to make contact with fellow enthusiasts and growers across the world so we can share experience and seed where regulations allow.



I make every effort to try and get our *Eranthis pinnatifida* to set seed this includes watching very carefully for the pollen to ripen then when it does I cross pollinate between the different clones in the hope of a seed crop.



Much of the beauty of the **Eranthis pinnatifida** flowers is in the colour contrast between the yellow tipped nectaries (Eranthis petals are reduced to nectaries, the white petal-like parts are in fact the sepals) and the violet anthers clustered around the pistil made up of the ovary, style, and stigma. The anthers do not all open together but gradually over the flowering period so I watch for the signs of the white pollen to appear (see above) then carefully collect it on a brush and transfer it to the stigmatic surfaces on the tip of the ovary. The anthers have evolved so

they do not all open at the same time; only three of the anthers above have pollen exposed.

The stigma of individual flowers may not be receptive when its pollen first appears so I repeat the pollination process several times through the flowering period. While the best results are obtained by cross pollinating between different clones you can also get seed from a single plant although there may be fewer seeds in the capsule.

This pot of **Eranthis pinnatifida** resulted from me carefully pollinating a single plant.





To give the best chance of a seed set I will also be pollinating the **Eranthis pinnatifida** planted out in the garden.



The Narcissus continue to attract my attention with more flowers opening every day - this small clump, growing in a sand bed, has increased from a single seedling – it is a rather attractive form.



Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister'

Every so often one of the seedlings stands out to me as being sufficiently attractive or different to be worthy of sharing with others and that is when I will give them a name. Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister' is one of those I deemed worthy of being named because the large frilly corona made it stand out from all the other sister seedlings in that pot, in addition it increased well, which is another important attribute if you are going to name a plant.



Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister'

The corona of Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister' can reach 5cms across when fully extended.



**Narcissus
'Craigton Chalice'**

This is another seedling that attracted my attention when I spotted the distinctive cup shape of the corona a few years ago.

It was one of the un-flowered seedlings I had planted when I first made the sand bed – I first featured it in [Bulb Log 0118](#).

I decided that to facilitate increasing it clonally I needed to lift some of the bulbs out of the sand bed to grow on in pots which I did last summer.



Last week when I saw the first flowers opening on the Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice' I had potted I began to wonder if I had got the bulbs mixed up because neither the colour nor the shape resembled the mature flower.



Different stages of development as the **Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice'** flowers emerge.



Because it was growing mixed in among many others in the sand bed I had not properly observed the development of this flower. Like many of the Hoop-petticoats the flower starts out creamy yellow before turning white but what gave me some doubt was the corona looked like it is going to have the more typical cone shape – then as the flower matures the distinctive cup shape develops, see flower on right.



Looking at the Narcissus in the sand bed I noticed a few bulbs were breaking the surface which is not where they should be growing the one in flower is Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice'. I carefully lifted it to grow in a pot but as the other two bulbs that were with it have no flowers, so cannot be confirmed to be this clone, I have planted them back into the sand. Note the bulb on the left has formed a fat contractile root: this is a strategy adopted when they are not growing deep enough – it will help to pull them down.



Mixed narcissus growing in the sand bed.





In this bulb house all the bulbs are grown in plastic pots stood on a bed of sand



Narcissus romieuxii



A pot of **Galanthus 'Glenorma'** is the first "early" to open its flowers in the bulb house.



Bulb house plunges



Galanthus gracilis

There is a tendency, when we first receive a bulb, to grow it in a pot until we build up sufficient numbers to ‘risk’ some in the garden however this does not always turn out well. How often do we kill plants through kindness? Protecting them under glass, worried about giving them too much water, can result in them growing poorly. When under such stress true bulbs such as *Galanthus* and *Narcissus* often react by breaking down forming many small bulbs instead of producing flowering sized bulbs – with experience we can use this to our advantage.

A few years ago I intentionally planted some *Galanthus* bulbs too near the surface of small pots to put them under stress resulting in the single large bulb breaking down into several small ones then I have spent the next two years growing them well to get them back to flowering size.

Using this method I have built up a good sized pot of *Galanthus* ‘**E.A. Bowles**’ from a single bulb and now have enough to plant some outside.





I also applied this method to this pot of **Galanthus 'Dryad Gold Bullion'** – the non-flowering bulbs should grow to flowering size for next year.



Now I will share some more of the variation in the Narcissus flowers opening in the mild conditions.



Pale yellow *Narcissus romieuxii* and white *Narcissus albidus*.



Pure white hybrid seedlings



I did not plant any Narcissus when I first converted this bulb house to sand beds it was mostly Fritillaria and other bulbs but in recent years I have been planting them to extend the period of flowering interest.



A good yellow form of **Narcissus romieuxii**



Narcissus are joined by Crocus



I will be sharing many more pictures from these sand beds in weeks to come.....