



BBS

Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 405th October 2022



Crocus speciosus and *Eucomis bicolor*



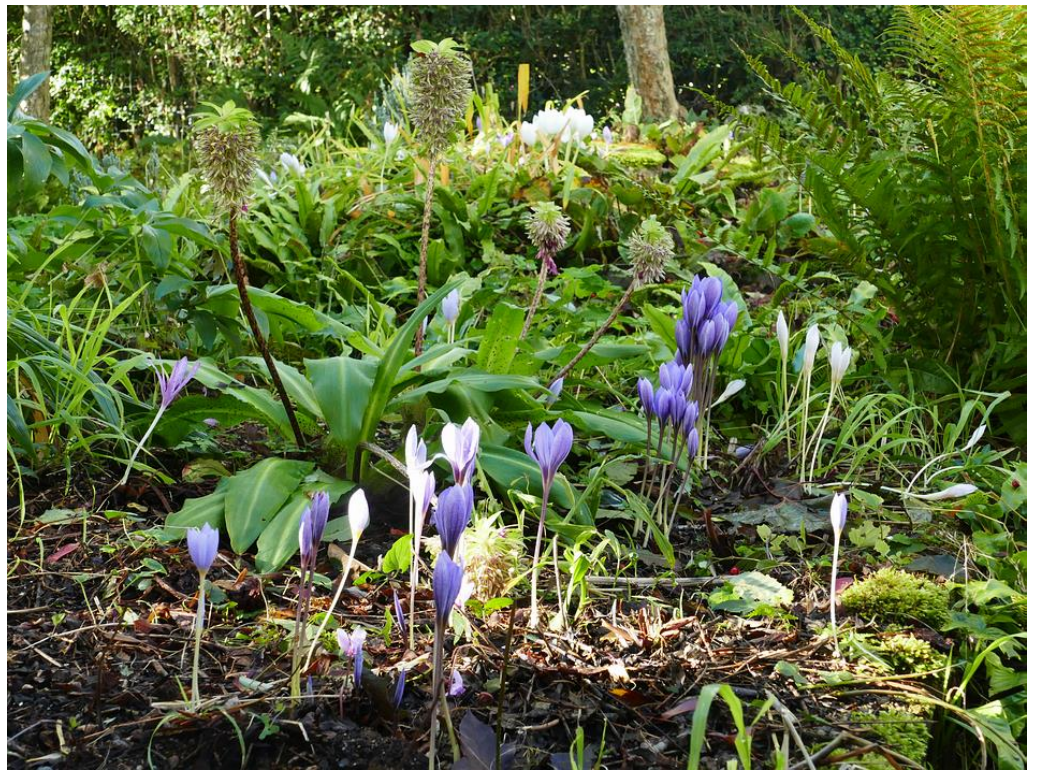
This is an extension of last week's photo essay celebrating the season of the autumn flowering Crocus which starts around mid-August lasting through September and well into October. We had one warm day last week when I took most of the pictures because I knew that hot on the heels of that warm front was another storm with predictions of galeforce winds and heavy rain all of which came to pass. It is wildly stated that the camera does not lie but any photographer will tell you that it can be used selectively. How you frame and compose an image controls how the subject is

shared with the viewer. By focusing in relatively tight on the cover image I was hiding the fact that these beautiful flowers were emerging through the chaotic autumn die back.



I usually prefer a low view point but occasionally looking straight down on a subject, such as into the faces of this group of **Crocus speciosus**, is the best angle to show the beautiful markings within the flowers.

In anticipation of the emerging crocus I had cleared away much of the old growth in this area to allow us to enjoy the emerging flowers. While I was clearing I thought of all the other plants that are sharing this same bit of ground. Spring Crocus and *Corydalis*, *Erythronium* and many other bulbs in addition to a number of herbaceous subjects all grow here bringing a succession of flowers and interest through most of the year. Where possible I would always recommend growing your crocus from seed this will result in a range of clones that better adapt to your garden, flower and seed around. If seed is not an option then go for some of the specialist bulb sellers or beg a few corms from a friend such as we did with the lovely dark form of *Crocus speciosus*, featured here and on the cover, with the aim of getting them to set seed. Thirty-some years ago we admired this dark flowered form growing in the late Alastair McKelvie's garden and he kindly lifted and gave us a few corms. Those few corms have increased through the years both clonally by clumping, as seen on the cover, as well as seeding around giving us a range of clones many sharing the same dark colouring.



Before I switched to digital cameras I used slide film where the cost of each image meant I had to consider very carefully and limit the number of pictures I took. Now with digital I will often take several images of the same subject using different angles and viewpoint.



Sometimes the old foliage adds interest to the scene. Here the shape colour and form provided by the yellowing *Roscoea* foliage supports the *Crocus speciosus* flowers both literally and visually.



Across the garden there is another area where *Crocus* flower though *Roscoea* foliage, there are species and hybrids including *Crocus banaticus*, *kotschyanus*, *pulchellus*, *speciosus albus* and *nudiforus* with a *Colchicum* behind.



We leave the Roscoea and Crocus to seed around giving the impression of a natural environment albeit in a garden setting.



Most of the autumn Crocus species that grow best in our northern climate come from open wooded habitats in the wild so they have already evolved to thrive in cooler moist soils. This natural selection process will continue through subsequent generations of garden seed.



All our **Crocus banaticus** originally entered the garden as seed from various sources then through time they, in turn, have seeded so they continue to increase.



Once more changing the view point of the picture gives very differing impressions.



Here I show mostly **Crocus banaticus** along with some white flowered *Crocus nudiflorus*.





Crocus banaticus

Dappled light enhances this image showing up some variation between these flowers.



Many of the individual **Crocus banaticus** corms increase clonally forming clusters of identical flowers while the seedlings display a subtle variation in the size shape and colour of their flowers, as in the image below.



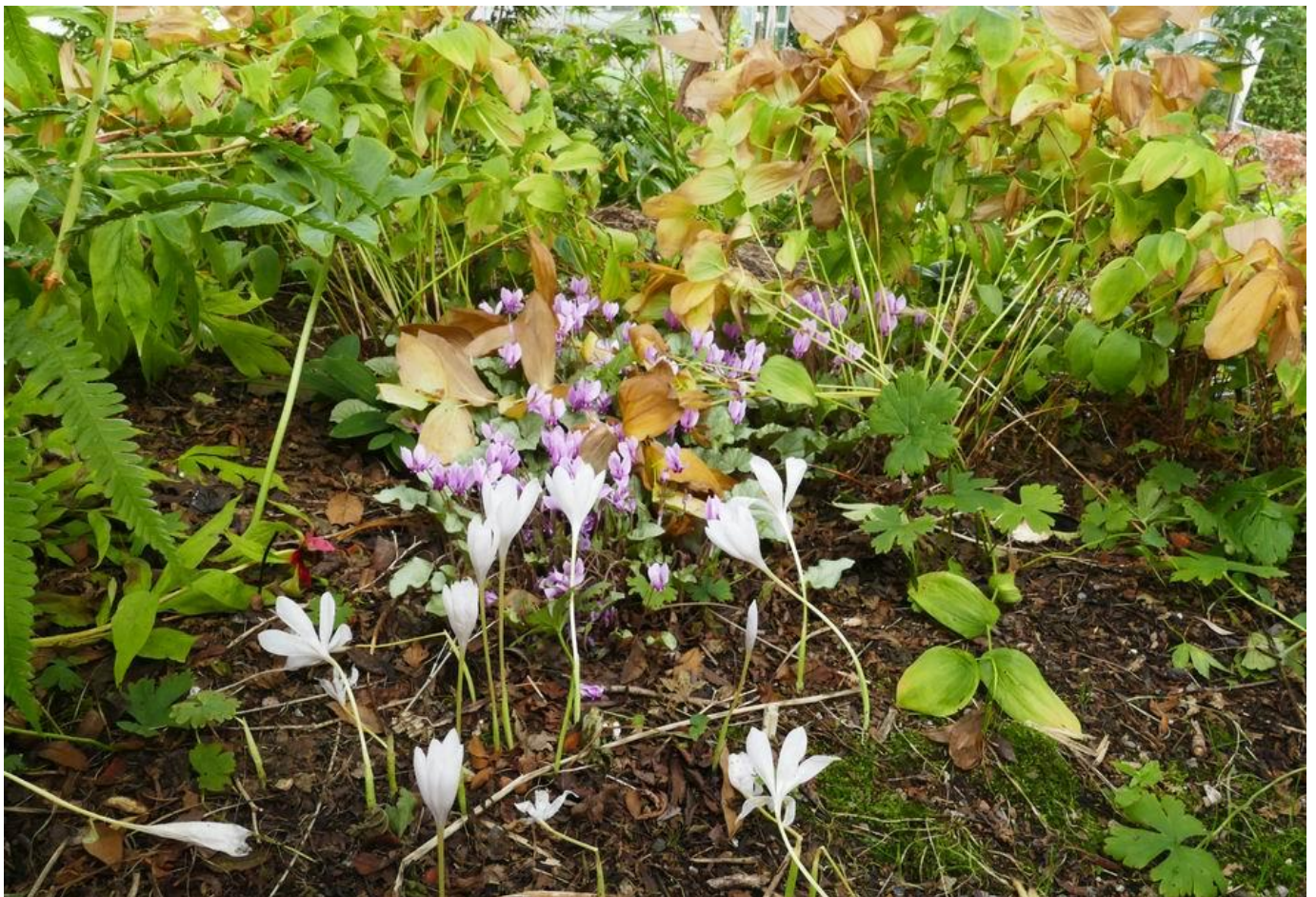


***Crocus banaticus* and *Crocus nudiflorus* albus.**

The flowers open wide in the warm air and with a goodly number of pollinators flying about, mostly hover flies, we can hope for a good crop of seed which will not ripen until next spring, when the seedpods push to the surface.



The scene changes quickly as these two pictures of a group of silver leaved **Cyclamen hederifolium** taken just a few days apart show.





I also cleared the old growths away from the area around these *Colchicum speciosum album* when I spotted them appearing.



Sometimes I am attracted to capture images of simple subjects when they are picked out in the light.



You might think that these two small plunge frames are for Crocus but they are Erythronium frames, which at this time of the year have been taken over by Crocus. The majority are Crocus nudiflorus in various colours which have both seeded as well as running about by means of the small stolons that grow out from the corms every year.



Not content with taking over the two frames they are also populating the gravel path between them.



Of course we love and encourage the Crocus.



Plants will always find a way I often find flower shoots poking through holes in some of the leaves fallen from the trees in the autumn but here a Crocus banaticus shoot is forcing its way through a growing Digitalis leaf.



Crocus banaticus is seeding around and populating one of the larger *Erythronium* plunge frames and we are very happy allowing nature to help plant the garden often in ways that we would not have thought of.



I cannot resist taking pictures when the light shine onto the Crocus like this.



Another moment where a shaft of light adds some magic by illuminating these Crocus hybrids to the extent that they stand out like stained glass - in the shade you might walk past them without noticing.



A nice Colchicum cultivar also catches my eye as I continue my walk around the garden.



I took this image of the Crocus hybrids growing in the slabs the day before the storm because I feared they would all get battered flat by the heavy rain and wind.



Most of the Crocus flowers in the garden came through the storm reasonably well despite the fact many branches and trees were brought down around our area. The many trees and shrubs we grow in the garden help to filter the wind providing some protection to the delicate Crocus flowers sheltering below.



I will round off this week with this group of **Crocus pulchellus** flowers growing in a natural way where they seeded themselves in the rock garden bed.....