



BULB LOG 15.....15th April 2009



Erythronium time

How often do you hear people say that plants are flowering earlier or later than normal? My question is just what is normal? Every year, every season is different depending on many factors chiefly temperature and moisture levels. This spring in our garden we are experiencing a compressed season of flowering in the bulbs especially the ones under glass. While some of the early ones flowered a bit late, some of the mid season ones have flowered that bit early so we have had a shorter but more intense flowering period. As a result I have hundreds of pictures from the bulb houses taken in recent weeks that I have not shown on the Bulb Log yet and now the Erythroniums are coming into their own as the dominant flower in the garden and I cannot resist showing you some of them this week.



Erythronium revolutum

The beautiful pink Erythronium revolutum grows over a very wide range in Western North America from British Columbia down to California. It is not surprising then that there are many variations to be found in flower colour (always shades of pink), leaf markings as well as the size and growth of the plant. In cultivation many of these geographical forms can come together and cross breed giving even more variations than are possible in the wild populations. We have been growing E. revolutum from seed in our garden for nearly thirty years and have many nice variations including some that clump up. These clumps have taken about seven years to form.



Erythronium oregonum wild

This is a very important picture and plant for me because this is the very first *Erythronium* that I have ever seen in the wild.

Erythronium oregonum growing near Portland in Oregon not in flower but just pushing through the leaf litter - I can tell from the fact that it has two leaves that it is going to flower this year.

Erythronium oregonum

Here are some *Erythronium oregonum* in flower this week in our garden. I imagine that the one above has also come into flower now in its home land.

One of the many interesting facts I discovered on my trip to Oregon was that most of the *Erythroniums* that I saw were at exactly the same stage of growth as the ones in our garden in North Eastern Scotland.



Erythronium oregonum

A detail of the flower shows just how beautiful a species this can be.

Notice the expanded shape of the filaments (the structure that holds the yellow anthers to the base of the flower) one of the diagnostic characters of this species.



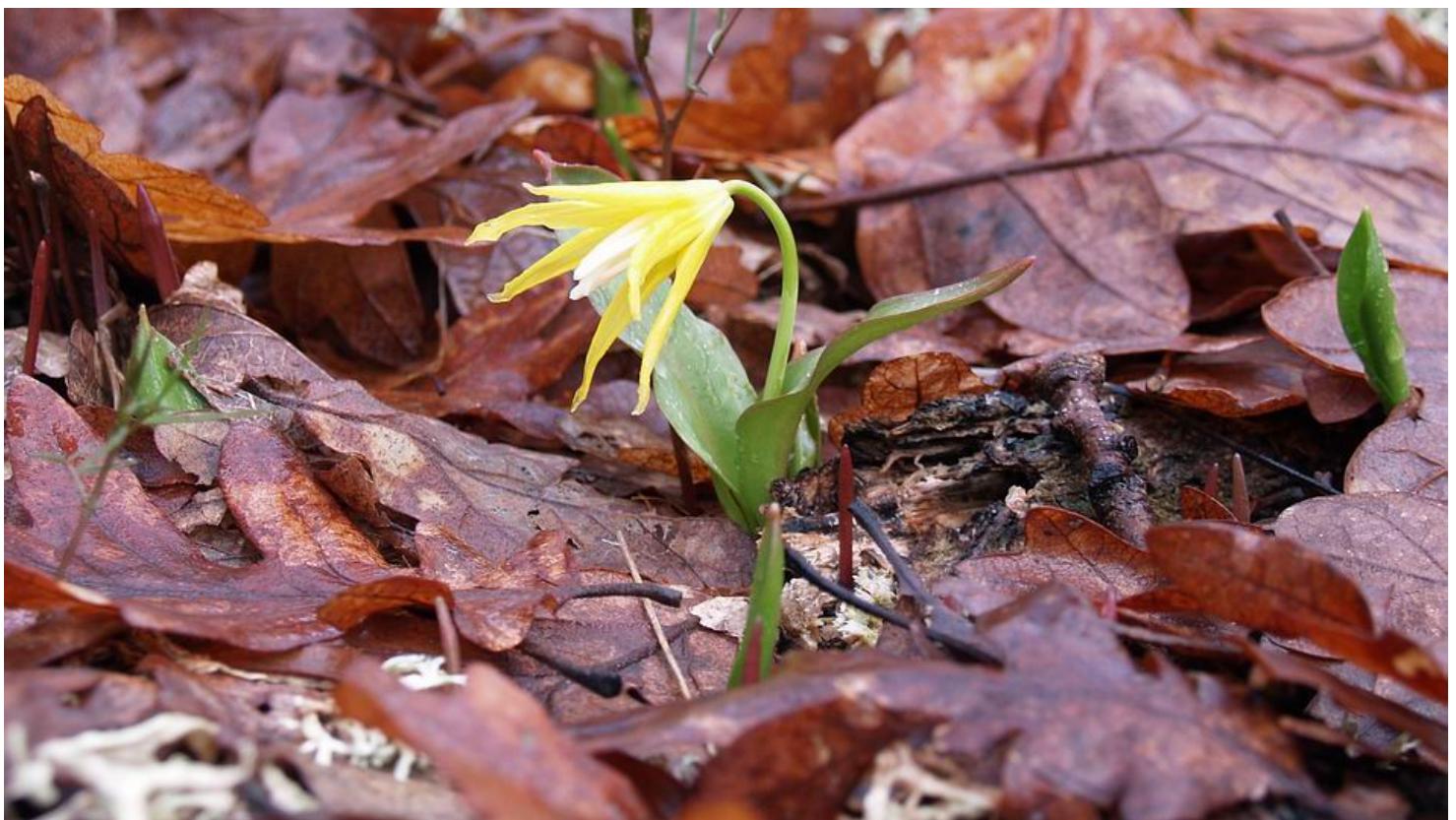
Ed Alverson

My guide through Oregon was Ed Alverson, many of you will know his name as he is a regular contributor to the Forum where he posts the most wonderful pictures of Erythroniums plus he has an excellent series of articles on the SRGC site on the Western Erythroniums.

Most of you will never have seen his picture as he is a very modest man with an extensive knowledge of the flora of Oregon and beyond.

We share a deep love of Erythroniums and I spent a number of happy days being driven by Ed the

length of Oregon looking at Erythronium sites. Unfortunately I was just too early to see many in flower especially as they were having a late season at least two weeks behind the normal – see it happens in the wild as well.



Erythronium grandiflorum

The next species Ed guided me to see was the yellow flowered Erythronium grandiflorum and after a lot of searching we did find one early flower for me to capture with my camera. We found a few flower buds just pushing through but this was the most advanced one we found.

Erythronium grandiflorum

Here again is an early flowering form of Erythronium growing in our garden. Notice it has reddish brown pollen while the one above pictured in the wild has pale creamy white pollen. These represent varieties, grandiflorum and pallidum and there is a third variety, chrysanthemum, which has golden yellow pollen.

We have a number of forms of E. grandiflorum representing all the varieties growing in the garden most of which



are only just coming through the ground just now. The group of seedlings that I took this picture of is always the first of this species to flower with us. It was raised from seed from a single source and has both brown pollen forms and golden yellow forms.

Erythronium Grandiflorum

Here is another one at the same site in Oregon which has its flower opening facing upwards before the stem has had a chance to elongate. I have often seen this happening in cultivation especially in high elevation forms and species of Erythronium and so I was very interested to see that it can also occur in wild populations.





Erythronium hendersonii habitat on Upper Table Rock

This woodland thicket is where Ed took me to find *Erythronium hendersonii* and if you look carefully you will see masses of green leaves all through the silver lichen covered twigs and branches.



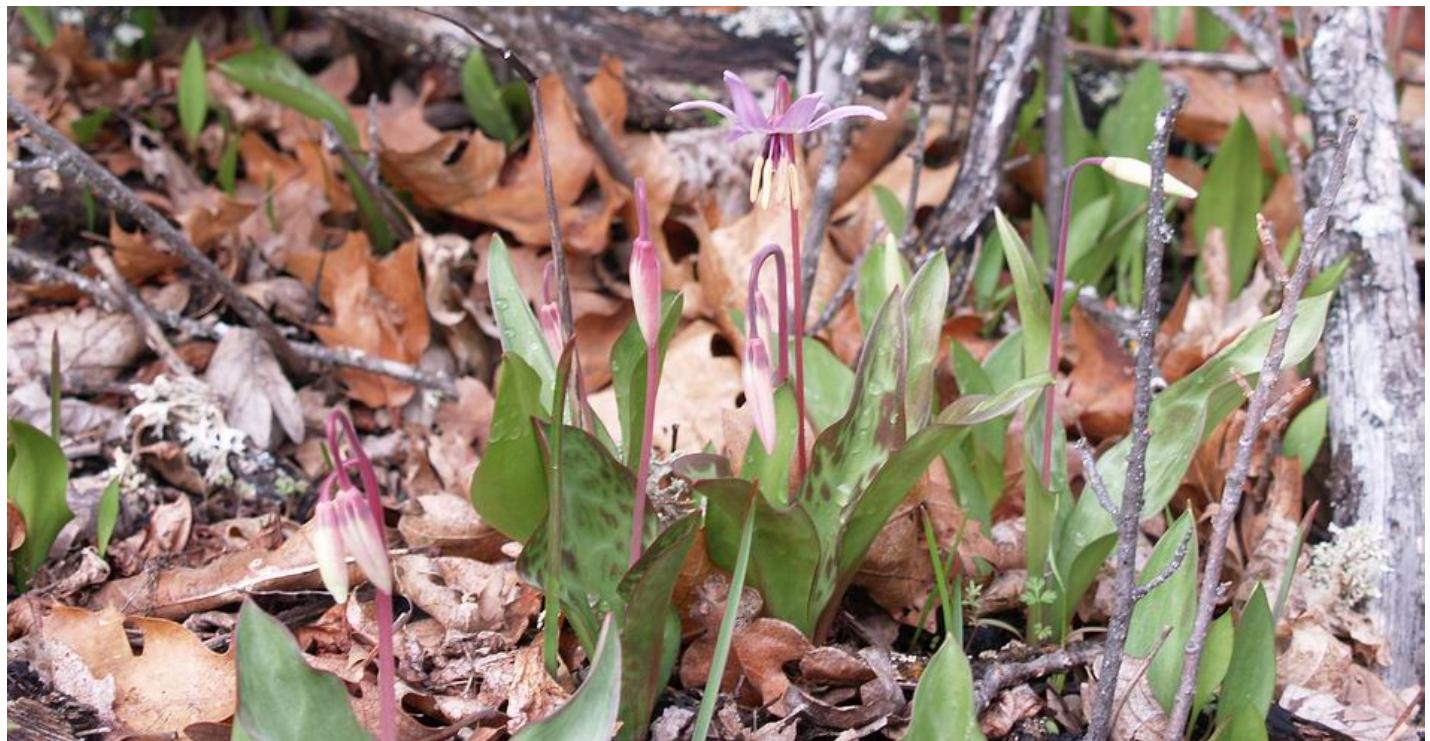
Erythronium hendersonii

I was luckier this time as we found a number of plants that had just opened their flowers to reveal one of the most beautiful species.



Garden habitat

Even though I did not see so many Erythroniums in flower it was very interesting for me to see the habitat that they grow in. Above is an area in our garden where I have been letting the Erythroniums naturalise below some of the larger Rhododendron species and to me it is somewhat similar to the habitat in the wild.



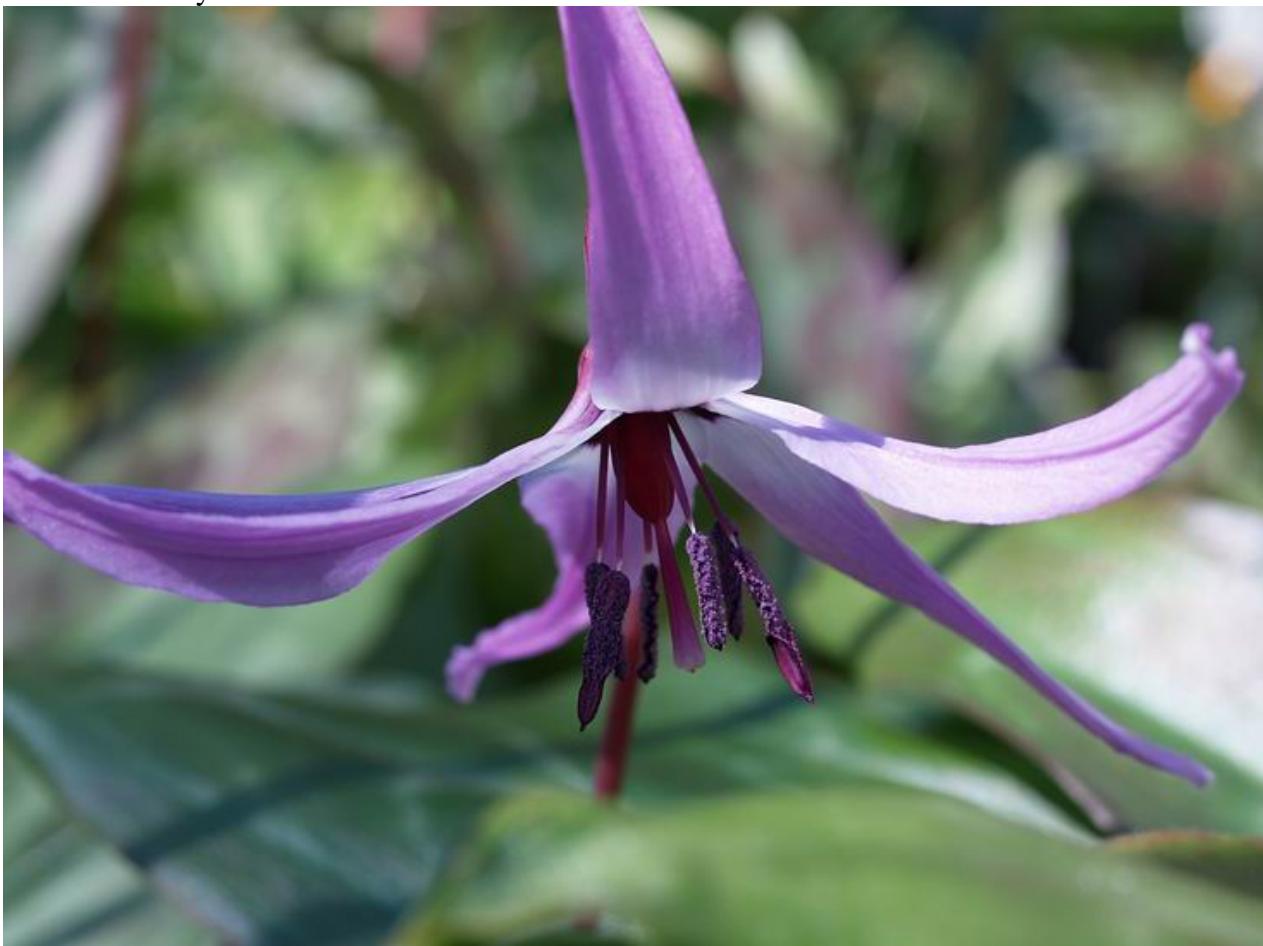
Erythronium hendersonii

The very first Erythronium hendersonii flower I spotted in the wild looked strange to me as it had pale yellow pollen – not a colour I had seen before in any of the ones we grow.



Erythronium hendersonii –brown pollen

The majority of the flowers we grow have brown pollen when the anthers dehisce – the outside of the anther is usually violet like the style.



Erythronium hendersonii – violet pollen

We also have a few forms that have this lovely dark violet pollen. What this variation does tell us is that the colour of the pollen in Western American species of Erythronium is not a useful diagnostic indicator as it can be variable even within a single population.



Erythronium hendersonii

This is a typical group of seed raised E. hendersonii growing in one of our plunges and below another group pictured against a grey background to remove the background distractions from the picture. Note that you can be easily distracted when this species is in flower.



**Erythronium
hendersonii**



Erythronium sibiricum

At last I have a form of *Erythronium sibiricum* that comes up and opens its flowers rather than trying to open them under ground as this cold loving species can so often do in cultivation.



Erythronium sibiricum

For a number of years now I have been acquiring as many forms of *E. sibiricum* as I can lay my hands on both as bulbs and seeds. These were seed raised and as I am always saying this is the best way of getting bulbs that are most likely to adapt to your growing conditions. This species does like to have a

cold winter followed by a sudden and warm spring to bring the flower up so I am delighted to have some that have adapted to our less defined season without the need to grow them in a pot then bring them under glass to get the stem to grow.



Erythronium sibiricum

The other big advantage is that you will get a variation in colour and form from seed raised plants and if you look at the picture two above of the buds you can see that no two are the same. This close up of two flowers shows very clearly that variation in the colours of the flowers and the shape of the tepals. I have a number of other pots of seedlings of this species that I hope will start to flower next year and I cannot wait to see the results. At last I have a form that I can now plant out in the garden and expect it to grow and flower naturally.



I will leave you this week with this picture of the garden showing that spring is with us now and a promise I will come back to some of the bulbs that have flowered under glass and I have not yet shown in the bulb logs.