

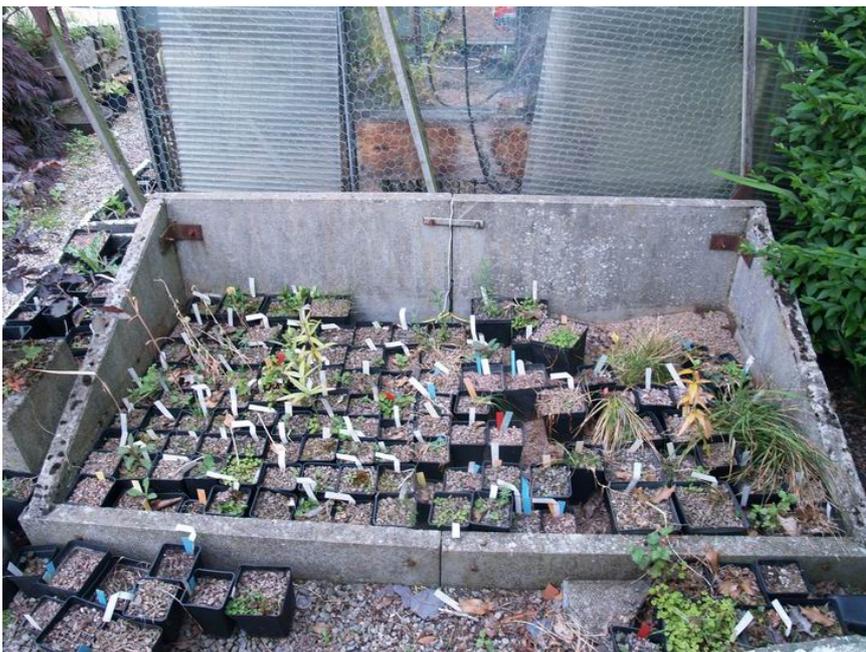


BULB LOG 31.....5th August 2009



Bulb flowers in the garden today

Late July and early August have never been the most floriferous times in our garden so today I decided to walk around and see how many bulbous –using the term very loosely- flowers I could find. It is always surprising how many you can find and when you bring them together they do form a pretty colourful picture. Can you identify what they all are?



My main task is still that of repotting and rationalising and now I am working through this **open frame** where I keep the bulbs that like some summer moisture. As growers we are always tempted to try to grow too many plants in pots and it then becomes difficult to give them all the attention they need. That is where the rationalisation comes in. I am trying to

cut down the number of plants I have in pots so I hope to plant out as many of these as possible directly into suitable garden beds, including the overspill from the frames, lined up in fish boxes (pic above right)



Crocus vallicola corms in growth

Crocus vallicola is one of the Crocus species which does not want to be dried out too much in summer and when I carefully explored into the first pot I found the shoots were already well extended as well as a quite extensive root system. The temptation was to leave them alone and to repot them earlier next year however, I remember doing just that last year and the year before. For the sake of the plants I am carefully working through them getting them all into nice fresh compost.



Narcissus cyclamineus

Narcissus cyclamineus also hates drying out completely and as you can see it also has quite an extensive root system already. Prolonged drying out will kill these bulbs and that is the main reason that this beautiful Narcissus is not offered more often in the trade. It just would not survive being lifted and stored by the bulb merchants for any length of time.



Fritillaria cirrhosa bulb

A number of Fritillarias also like to root early and this includes many of the Chinese species such as *Fritillaria cirrhosa*. You can see the bulb on the left has already got roots exploring for moisture. In fact with many of these bulbs, if they never dry out, the new roots can start to emerge as the previous season's growth dies back.



Plant roots in gravel

The compost I am using for these moisture loving bulbs is based on my basic mixture of 2 parts sand, 2 parts gravel and 1 part leafmould which I then mix with more leafmould at around 50/50 giving a cool humus rich but still well drained compost that can hold plenty air as well as moisture. I was fascinated by these Ivy roots growing deep into the gravel heap. They are beautifully branched and healthy and obviously they are finding nutrients even in this gravel – something that I have always believed to be the case since I have been using this gravel made from crushed rock from a local quarry.



Fungal growth in leaf mould

The leafmould is also interesting as I keep finding areas in the heap which are full of these white fungal fibres. I am convinced that this makes for healthy compost full of friendly fungi that hopefully will help fend off the potentially harmful fungi that can cause rotting and infections in the bulbs.



Bulb bed makeover

Just as I described two weeks ago one job leads to another and I have been wanting to add a mulch to this bulb bed to help control the unwelcome growth of weeds and liverwort - however the soil level was already over the top of the granite edging stones. It suddenly dawned on me that if I turned the edging stones on to their edges, I would not only create more height but I would also get a good 15 cms at least of more planting space along each edge.



Have you ever wondered, as I have, why archaeologists have to dig so deep down into the ground to reach the past. Well now I know where all that dirt comes from it is all down to gardeners who keep bringing in more stones, soil, mulches, etc.☺ So now I have not only solved the problem of retaining the mulch that I can now put on but I have got some extra planting spaces to take bulbs from the pots in the fish boxes plus I have somewhere to put all the old potting

compost – that is a win-win-win situation to bring a smile to any managerial consultant’s face. Gardens in middle age, like ours, bring many problems. When you start out gardening you generally have a target in mind of what you want your garden to look like. As you progress through your gardening years you start to realise that this is a very unrealistic goal. It is not that with dedication and hard work you will not attain your goal of a beautiful mature garden but once you have reached your goal nature takes over and you discover that plants keep growing and space becomes scarce so if you want a new plant something else has to go to make way. You then realise that it is not the destination that is important but the journey and every phase of your garden will bring new challenges and problems as old targets are reached and new ones created – gardening is a *process*.



Granite toby

Among the edging stones are a number of granite tobys – these stones were once outside every house in Aberdeen – they had a hinged cast iron cover that gave access to turn off the water supply to the properties. I have placed them upside down so they provide nice mini-troughs to take a few special bulbs.



Failures

I should point out that not every pot that I go into is full of healthy bulbs – I have plenty of failures and problems as well; like these crocus corms that have rotted away. I do get upset when I lose any plant but I always try to be positive and work out *why* I lost it so that I can make any necessary correction to better succeed in the future.



Arisaema nepenthoides Primula florindae and Tropaeolum speciosum

As I walk back and forward with the pots and compost my eye was taken by this very pretty combination of the seed head of Arisaema nepenthoides with the flowers of Primula florindae intertwined by Tropaeolum speciosum.



Cyclamen purpurescens

Now I will show you some of the plants that I picked the flowers in the opening picture from – like the beautifully scented *Cyclamen purpurascens*; the first *Cyclamen* to flower for us in the summer.



Cyclamen hederifolium album

Cyclamen hederifolium album always flowers before the pink forms.



Codonopsis greywilsonii and Clematis barbellata

Codonopsis greywilsonii climbs up through Clematis barbellata which has this year put on a second flush of late flowers as well as the fluffy seed heads from the early spring main flowering.



Parochetus communis

A blue pea from the Himalaya with clover like leaves; this plant also grows in South Africa but that form is not hardy with us.



Dicentra formosa and Corydalis species

Some late flowers on a *Dicentra formosa* that is growing in cool moist shade and a yellow *Corydalis* species collected many years ago in the Himalaya by Alastair McKelvie.



Corydalis hybrid and *Corydalis cashmeriana*

Corydalis cashmeriana dies back at the end of the spring and grows a new set of leaves in late summer often accompanied by some rather purple blue flowers as can be seen above - nothing like the striking colour of the spring flowering. This new growth has appeared early most likely due to our particularly wet July weather.



Pseudofumaria lutea* and *alba

Formerly called *Corydalis lutea* and *C. lutea alba* these plants self seed all around. We can easily weed them out when they put themselves where we do not want them to be.



Tropaeolum speciosum

Tropaeolum speciosum is another plant that is so successful in our garden that we regularly have to pull it out to prevent it smothering other plants and shrubs.



Finally as I go around I keep my eye on many nice fat seed pods on **trillium hybrids** all of which I want to sow and grow on so perhaps my program of rationalisation will not be entirely successful. I may empty the fish boxes of the pots of bulbs that are there just now but I will quickly fill them up again with new seedlings and the next step on the journey that is our garden.

