



BULB LOG 19.....13th May 2009



Garden View with Rhododendrons



This view of the garden looking East shows a few of the large number of Rhododendrons that we grow – the large one is *R. rex* ssp *fictolacteum*. My main reason for showing this sequence of pictures was to show our proximity to the North Sea. Our garden sits at an elevation of around 250 feet and is approximately 2.5 miles from the sea. The sea has a huge effect on our local climate keeping things cool in the summer and moderating the extremes of cold in the winter. Unfortunately it also often brings us cool wet summers which are good for the Rhododendrons but not so good for the bulbs.



Corydalis turtschaninovii

Last week I showed a picture of *Corydalis flexuosa* and this week I am showing two more blue corydalis species. *Corydalis turtschaninovii* varies in colour from pure blue to a purple blue with just a hint of red through the colour. Henrik Zetterlund named a selection of this lovely species *Corydalis* 'Eric The Red' which has a slight purple wash on the foliage, The name does not refer to the colour but to a famous Viking King



Corydalis cashmeriana

Another of my favourites is *Corydalis cashmeriana* which has some of the bluest flowers of all plants. There must be some reason why these later flowering *Corydalis* species are blue while the earlier ones tend towards the warmer colours. Most likely it is connected

to the pollinators that are around at the time and what colour attracts them most efficiently. To keep this plant happy and growing well it is best to lift and divide it at least every second year around August when the first set of growth dies back. It enjoys generous amounts of leaf mould or other organic composts.



Erythronium caucasica seeds

I have just collected the first of the Erythronium seeds from the garden and it is also the first time I have ever had my own seed from Erythronium caucasica. I always see this as the prime aim and a great breakthrough when I can get a plant seeding happily in the garden and be able to raise plants from our own seeds. In this case I have sown the seed immediately but will keep the seed pot protected from any excessive moisture we get through the summer.

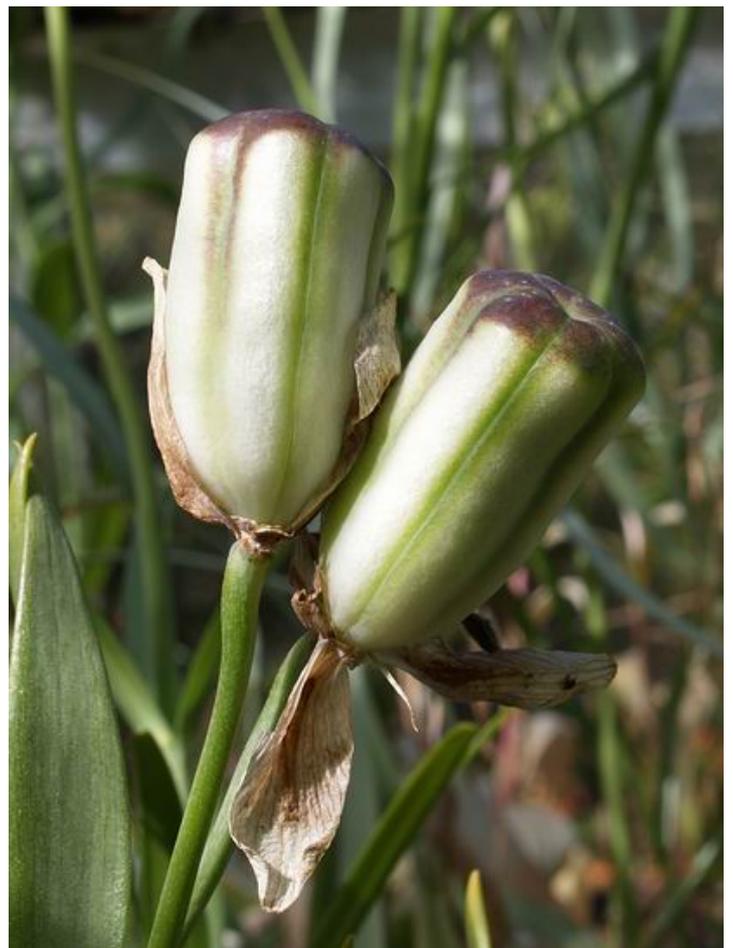


Frit House

Many of the frits have gone back now which is a bit earlier than I would have liked as it did not seem that they have been in growth that long. When I check back most have been above ground for the best part of four months now and that is plenty of time to build a good bulb for next year. The ones that have flowered tend to grow for a bit longer and those that have been fertilised and are setting seed will grow for about four more weeks than their unfertilised siblings.



These nice fat **Fritillaria seed pods** show that these flowers were successfully fertilised. These bulbs will continue to grow until the seed is fully ripe while other stems in the same pot, which either did not flower or were not pollinated successfully, are already going yellow and dieing back.



Fritillaria seed pods

These Fritillaria seed pods show a record of the weather conditions in that you can see clearly the ones on the left are nice and fat only at the very top. This tells me that the flower was pollinated and the pollen tube started to grow down toward the seed pod – it fertilised the ovules at the top of the ovary where they have swelled but then the pollen stopped growing and the rest of the ovules have not been fertilised. The reason for this is the weather – just at the time the pollen tube was growing our conditions changed from warm and sunny to very cold and damp. The pods on the right were luckier as the temperatures stayed favourable while the pollen tube was growing.



Bulb House

In the bulb house it is much the same with most of the leaves are now starting to turn yellow as the bulbs head into their summer dormancy.



The dried remains of the flowers remain attached which can be a problem in cold damp conditions as they can become infected with moulds.



You can see on the left that the stems are still green and alive even though the leaves have now died back. It is only once the seeds are completely ripe and the capsule starts to dry and split that the stems start to yellow from the top down as the goodness is drawn back into the bulb.



These are two **Narcissus stems** that I removed the seed pods from before they had started to go yellow at the top and you can see the droplets of sap oozing out. Under normal growth the bulb would stop producing this sap when the seed is fully ripe. The seed is perfectly viable when collected at this early stage but for the sake of the plant it is best to wait for the top of the stem to go yellow then there is no loss of nutrients to the bulb and you minimise the risk of spreading disease through the still active tissue.



These are the seeds collected from **Narcissus romieuxii rifanus** and you can see the different stages of the two capsules. The one on the right is fully ripe as the stem at the top is dried out while the left hand one is still slightly green. These seeds were collected from similar capsules and show that in spite of the varying ripeness of the stem the seeds are all the same.



Allium derderianum

This is the first time I have flowered *Allium derderianum*. I got a small bulblet a few years ago from a friend and now it has reached flowering size I can see just what a special wee onion this is. It has a beautiful good sized flower held some 5cm as above the broad leaves. I have been pollinating it with a paint brush in the hope that I can get some seeds.



Allium yosemitense

Allium yosemitense is another choice onion from North America which I have grown successfully for a number of years having had seed from it on a number of occasions .



Finally a group of **Ornithogalum** that I was given by a generous Forumist last year – they are flowering beautifully and I am hoping that I can get seeds from them which will give me the best chance of maintaining them in the garden in the long term. All I have to do now is try and work out what species they all are.