



BULB LOG 15.....14th April 2010



Corydalis



Luckily we have not had any more snow and we went from the freezing conditions of ten days ago to unseasonable highs of 14C. It was a great joy to feel the warmth of the sun and the garden plants have certainly responded with a flush of growth and a rush into flower for many bulbs, Rhododendrons and alpine plants. The highest temperatures came when we were away for a few days at the Edinburgh Show and unfortunately some of the young leaves in the Fritillaria house were frazzled by the heat under the glass.

Front Drive

Regular readers of the Bulb Log will know that there is no area of our garden that is not planted up in some way and that includes the gravel area between the slabs of the front drives. I get very dismayed by the trend where people pave over their front garden with some kind of impervious surface to provide a personal parking space – in my view it should simply not be allowed.

With a bit of imagination a parking space could still be created at the same time as providing planting opportunities for well chosen plants.

It must be over twenty years ago that I was on my hands and knees weeding the gravel strip between the drive in paving slabs when it suddenly dawned on me that this deep layer of gravel was a perfect alpine bed so I started to sow alpine seeds. The most effective summer cover is *Geranium sanguineum* which provides a pink/purple carpet all summer which can be cleaned up after it goes dormant in the winter. As it is well into May before the *Geranium* starts into growth again I have all the late winter and spring to enjoy the many bulbs that I also sow as seed scattered in the autumn.



Bulbs in drive

The Crocus have all past flowering and now it is the turn of these Narcissus, flowering for the first time since I scattered the seed, Corydalis and Anemone – later I will show you that even Erythroniums will grow here.



Erythronium bed

In the back garden the Erythronium leaves are making a wonderful display showing just how variable and attractive they can be.



Erythronium revolutum leaves

The variation found even in a single species is quite amazing as these Erythronium revolutum leaves show. Some can have a very pale hardly discernable pattern while others can be almost completely dark tawny brown.



Erythronium revolutum clumps

The other observation is that since I planted out the bulbs singly some of them have started to clump up quite well while others remain as single bulbs. This is also the area where I just leave the seeds to their own devices to self sow and naturalise and you can see the evidence of the seedlings of varying ages in this picture. All first and second year Erythronium seedlings leaves are plain green it is not usually until the third year that any evidence of the pattern starts to appear and it could be five years before you see the full extent of the pattern in all its glory.



Erythronium 'Craigton Cover Girl' leaves

These are the leaves of one of my own Erythronium revolutum hybrids- 'Craigton Cover Girl' – they also have a fine strong pattern. The pattern on all Erythronium leaves is strongest when they first emerge then the colour fades a bit as they mature.



Erythronium 'Craigton Beauty' leaves

Erythronium 'Craigton Beauty' is a selection raised from seed of E. 'White Beauty' which has stronger growth, with generally more flowers to the stem than the seed parent - it also has better marked leaves and red flower stems. I suspect that the increased strength of 'Craigton Beauty' is due to it being relatively recently raised from seed while 'White Beauty' has been increased by division for over one hundred years now.



E. 'White Beauty' leaves

The leaves of E. 'White Beauty' have less of the dark colour than the 'Craigton Beauty' selection.



Garden beds

The rock garden bed is dotted with blue and yellow from the various Scilla and Narcissus while in the Erythronium plunge beds just the earliest species are flowering.



Trillium rivale and Erythronium dens canis

One of the earliest species to reach its peak flowering is Erythronium dens canis and it too has very variable leaf patterns but this time the pattern is random blotches that does not follow the veins and ribs of the leaves like those of the Western North American species. The very pale pink and white group towards the front of the picture are a clump of self sown seedlings from the dark pink form above.



Erythronium sibiricum

I am so delighted that *Erythronium sibiricum* has begun to enjoy growing in our garden. I have spent years obtaining bulbs and raising it from seed until I found clones that would take to our changeable climate and flower naturally instead of trying to open its flowers while they are still under ground . Flowers opening underground is a common problem with this species that is used to a cold winter followed by a sudden spring.



Erythronium sibiricum seedling

Here you can see the first of this basket of seedlings to flower this year and it is on a good stem that holds it well clear of the ground.



Erythronium sibiricum

This is a pot built up from a single bulb that has given me problems in the past when the flowers try and open underground. I think that the cold winter has suited it well as this year the stems have grown without the need for me to lift the pot into the glasshouse.



Erythronium sibiricum

Here is yet another pot that is more advanced with ripe pollen and reflexed flowers.



Erythronium sibiricum

Here I have taken a comparison photograph to illustrate the variation in colour between these two clones.



Erythronium sibiricum

A full frontal view of a flower shows that while this species is closely related to *E. dens canis* there are various features that separate the two species -the colour of the pollen, plus the shape of the filaments and style - all very different.



Erythronium sibericum and Erythronium sibericum 'Olja'

The last two pictures of Erythronium sibericum for just now shows the darker form from above alongside 'Olja' an almost white form with just a flush of violet in the petals.



Erythronium hendersonii

One of the earliest of the Western North American species to flower for us is Erythronium hendersonii - it also shows a considerable variation in the colour of the flowers. They always have a dark blackcurrant coloured centre and pink/violet flushed petals but the degree of these are very variable.



Scoliopus bigelowii

I managed to capture three midge (flies) on this flower of *Scoliopus bigelowii*. It was not an easy task as they disappeared at the slightest hint of movement but I was determined to illustrate how the scent of this plant attracts masses of flies- both these midges and bluebottles - to aid in pollination and hence its fertilisation.



Garden bed

I will leave you this week with another view showing the dominant colours of *Corydalis* that are enriching our garden just now.