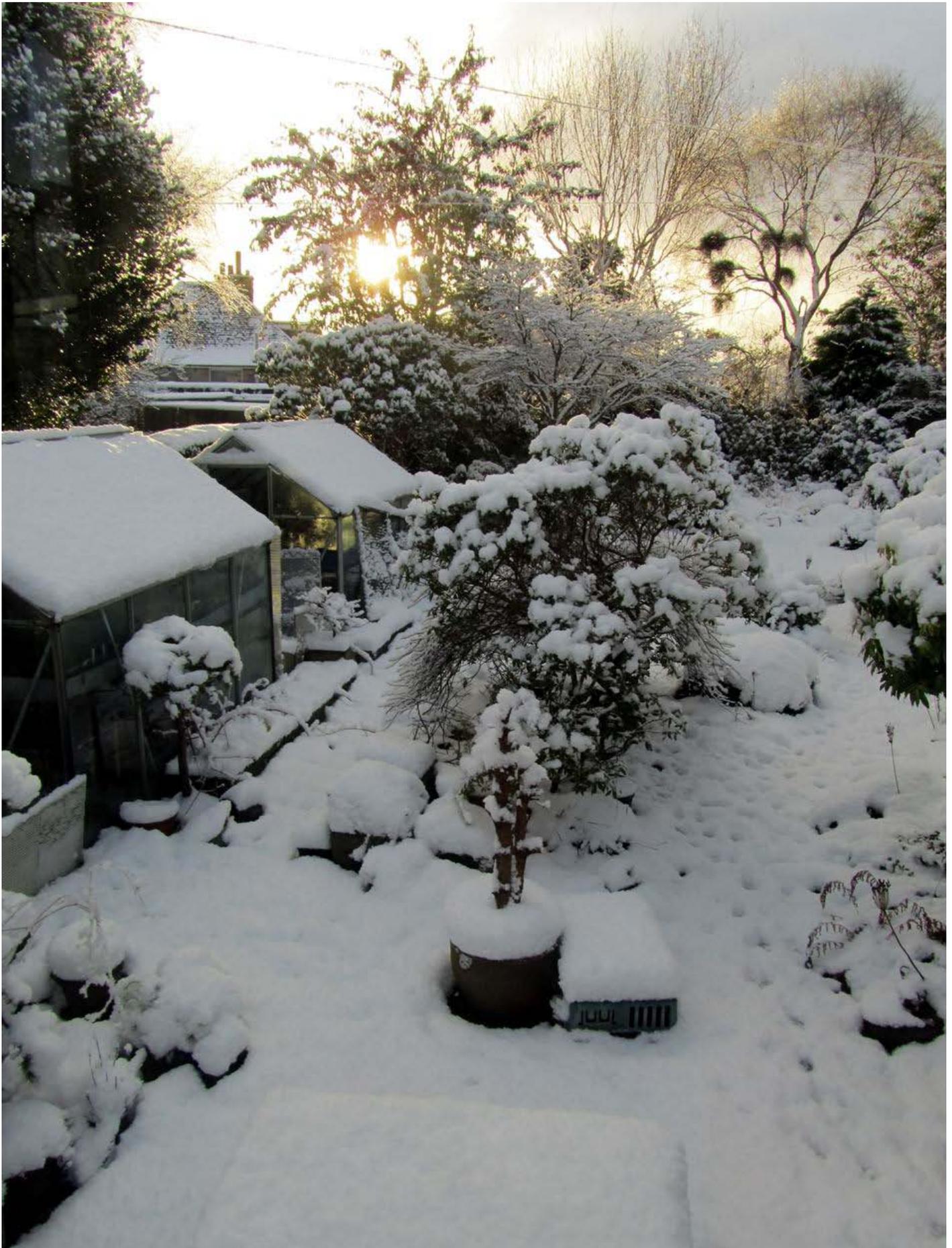




BULB LOG 48.....1st December 2010



Sun rising over snow covered garden

Almost as soon as I had posted last week's bulb log the North East of Scotland was gripped by the snow just as forecast. Since I took this photograph it has just got deeper and deeper as well as spreading wider through the country causing things to grind to a halt in many places. I am certainly glad that I decided not to water the bulb houses even though many of the bulbs are sitting in compost that is getting towards the dry side. They can cope much better with the cold period when they are on the dry side for a number of reasons but the two main factors are: 1) wet compost conducts the cold much quicker to the bulbs and 2) the more water that the plants have in their systems the more they can be damaged by freezing conditions rupturing the cells.



Bulb house under snow

In the bulb house the light level is even lower than normal due to the snow on the roof and this allied with the cold has slowed down most growth. I was moved to photograph –below–a recently shed Acer leaf trapped between the snow and the glass of the roof.





Crocus laevigatus

Among bulbs still flowering are this pot of *Crocus laevigatus* which are just waiting for a bit of warmth to open their flowers – they might have to wait a while.



Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus

One of the other reliable winter flowering bulbs is the so-called *Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus*. It has long been my suspicion that this is in fact a hybrid between *Narcissus romieuxii* and *Narcissus cantabricus foliosus*. Its looks certainly fall in between those two species and that would also equate to this early flowering period. Many *Narcissus* hybrids do not produce any seed or very little seed per capsule however this one produces a reasonably full capsule of seed most years.



Sorbus hupehensis berries

I had hoped to be showing you a nice detailed picture of the waxwings gorging on these berries this week but the snow seems to have driven them away for the mean time. Take two - I have just seen a small flock flitting over the garden trying to pluck up the courage to drop in.



Androsace in raised bed.

I took this picture of *Androsace villosa jacquemontii*, *Androsace sempervivoides* and *Androsace mucronifolia* x *sempervivoides* before the snow came to illustrate one of the problems that we have to cope with when trying to grow them – the near constant and excessive wet through our winter. Look carefully at the picture and you will see that the hybrid on the right is the worst affected.



Cover

I normally put some of my small covers over each one but this year I have chosen to put one of the small trough covers over the three of them. This serves to keep most of the water off them but also allows a good flow of air to prevent them from rotting off.



Cover under snow

More recently the cover has kept the snow off them.



Snow cover beginning

Ideally I would like the troughs and raise beds to be covered with snow all winter as that keeps them at a fairly even temperature and prevents too much free moisture lying on them but this is not going to happen. Although we can get our share of snow cover it is never going to stay around for much more than a few weeks at a time before the winds change direction and depending which direction they move to we can get milder and wetter conditions again.



Snow cap on troughs

The snow capped troughs make a lovely picture and even though some of them are now completely buried and cannot be seen they still form attractive hummocks in the snow.



Snow on Rhododendron

Many of the trees and shrubs are decorated by snow like this Rhododendron but there is a point where it ceases to be decorative and can become destructive.



Snow on Rhododendron

This is the dwarf Rhododendron bed which is mostly just a giant hummock of snow except at this edge where the weight of the snow is starting to force the small branches down opening up the bush. This is not desirable as permanent damages can be done. Where it is possible I will carefully remove the worst of the snow from any trees and shrubs that look like they may be damaged.



Snow on bulb house roof

This is one night's snowfall on the bulb house roof and these light weight aluminium structures are not engineered to cope with this significant extra weight so I remove as much as I can each day.



Bulb house with snow removed.

I think I have said before that I once roughly calculated the weight of 15cms of snow lying on an 183cm by 244cm(6ft x8ft) glasshouse would be around 400-500Kg and could easily flatten the whole structure. If you are in an area not used to snow and you are now experiencing this pleasure, be warned of this danger.



Snow falling

The snow continues to fall but it does not seem to bother Lily and Poppy much except that it is now much deeper than their wee leggies and they do not like ploughing through that so much.



Poppy and Lily