



Hamamelis x intermedia

The snow has now gone and the sun came out on Sunday so I could have a good walk around and see what the garden and plants looked like without the snow and deep frost. It is always cheering to see the winter flowering shrubs such as *Hamamelis x intermedia* also heralding the start of another year.



I was also able to check out how the bulbs in the bulb houses are looking now they are not frozen.



Watering Narcissus

Now the temperature has risen to 3C outside and up to 5C under glass the stems and the leaves of the bulbs are starting to flop over indicating to me that they are desperately short of water. It is a juggling act to get your watering regime correct in these wintry conditions. While it is best for the survival of the bulbs that they are not



too full of water in freezing conditions, when the frost goes they can be desperate for moisture. The compost always seems to dry out particularly quickly after freezing conditions perhaps because the water is drawn to the surface as it turns to ice then it can evaporate quickly as the thaw sets in. It was my decision, qualified by the weather forecast predicting that we would only experience night time frosts in the next several days that I had to water the bulbs that are in growth.

I followed my own guide line of watering in proportion to the amount of leaf growth visible. I flooded the pots with plenty of growth and gave a generous watering to all the others with signs of green shoots. I only watered the pots that showed no signs of growth if the gravel top dressing looked to be dry. If the gravel looks damp on a bright day that usually indicates that the compost below is also sufficiently damp to keep the bulbs ticking over until they put on a spurt of growth and gravel that looks dry indicates that the compost may need a small amount of water added.



Narcissus flopping over

This picture shows the Narcissus stems and leaves flopping all over the place indicating they are short of water.



Narcissus stems upright

This picture shows that the same Narcissus (shown flopping over in the picture above this on) has become quite turgid within an hour of watering. Not only are the stems and leaves held upright but the flowers have also expanded and look fresh rather than limp.



Narcissus 'Joan Stead'

The flowers on my pot of Narcissus 'Joan Stead' have not revived as well as I would have liked.



Narcissus 'Joan Stead' withered flowers

While the stems seem to have stood up the majority of the flowers remain shrivelled and there is no way they are going to be revived this year. The only ones that look better are the ones that are still just coming out now. All the flowers that were just starting to open before we had the freezing conditions for three weeks have been spoiled. I am just hoping that it is just the flowers that have been damaged and that the freezing has not fatally damaged the bulbs. These were in the plunge that did not have the warming cables to help moderate the worst of the cold. I was hoping to confirm if I had a single or more than one clone in this pot but that will have to wait until next year.



Narcissus romieuxii albidus

Even though it stands on the same unprotected plunge as the N. 'Joan Stead' this pot of *Narcissus romieuxii albidus* has revived well and looks relatively unscathed by the freezing conditions.

Different species as well as different genera have variable tolerance to freezing conditions.



Narcissus romieuxii albidus

Another pot of *Narcissus romieuxii albidus* with a different provenance also looks good after a through watering. This pot did have the benefit of being on a plunge with a soil warming cable. You have to be philosophical with a positive attitude when growing bulbs as your cultivation methods will be challenged and you will lose plants. As long as I understand why they died then I do not regard losses of bulbs to be a totally negative experience, no matter how disappointing it may be. As I mentioned last week it is still way too early to know what long term damage, if any, has been caused by the prolonged period of freezing that the bulbs were exposed to.



Cyclamen persicum

To the right is a plant of *Cyclamen persicum* which looked very unhappy during the cold and I was slightly worried by the limp leaves but it too has revived after a good watering as the picture on the right illustrates. This pot also sits on the unprotected plunge so it will be interesting to note how it has coped with the cold. If it survives unscathed then it will prove to those judges who when they come across *C. persicum* on the show benches just walk by pronouncing it as not hardy. I should point out that this plant was originally raised from seed of wild origin and it is not one of the many florists' selections that are offered by the thousands.



Eruption in pot

I just love these eruptions when the gravel in a pot of bulbs gets pushed up by the shoots slowly growing towards the light. This phenomenon mostly occurs when you have a lot of bulbs in a pot and it is not just the gravel that is being forced upwards by the shoots but all the compost on top of the bulbs. A good stream of water when I soak the pot usually washes the compost back down between the shoots.



Crocus imperati suaveolens

It was not just me who was enjoying the brief glimpse of the sunshine and the warmth that it created in the bulb house but also some of the Crocus flowers were encouraged to display their beauty. Having been in bud for around six weeks now this pot of Crocus imperati suaveolens can now display its true beauty.



Crocus laevigatus

The first Crocus laevigatus flower opened way back in October and here is one opening for the very first time in the weak and watery winter sunshine. As I have a number of pots of seed raised corms they are well mixed up in both colour variations as well as when they flower.



Crocus michelsonii

Just compare this week's picture of *Crocus michelsonii* with the one I showed in last week's bulb log to see how quickly it has responded to the slightly raised temperature. Also I have noticed that now we are into the second half of January the daylight hours are starting to extend and the sun is getting slightly higher in the sky – it will soon be on the bulb houses for more than the forty minutes a day we are getting just now.



Leaves on path

As well as enjoying the sunshine on my walk around the garden I could not help but notice all the extra leaves that have been brought down by the cold.



Gathering the leaves

We have a number of Cotoneaster trees in the garden and they tend to hold their leaves right through until February or March unless we get a prolonged cold spell like we have just experienced. Now the snow has gone it is essential to gather up the leaves to reveal the paths again. The leaves are placed in our leaf mould heaps and will provide a valuable component of our potting compost.



Leaf vac and blower

I am not a big fan of gadgets but this vacuum/blower makes clearing the leaves from the beds a simple task and it also helps greatly when picking up the leaves that are left after we scoop the majority of them up with a snow shovel.



Haberlea and Ramonda

As well as a lot of bulbs this bed contains a lot of Haberlea, Ramonda and New Zealand plants so it is important that they do not become buried under the wet leaves for any length of time.



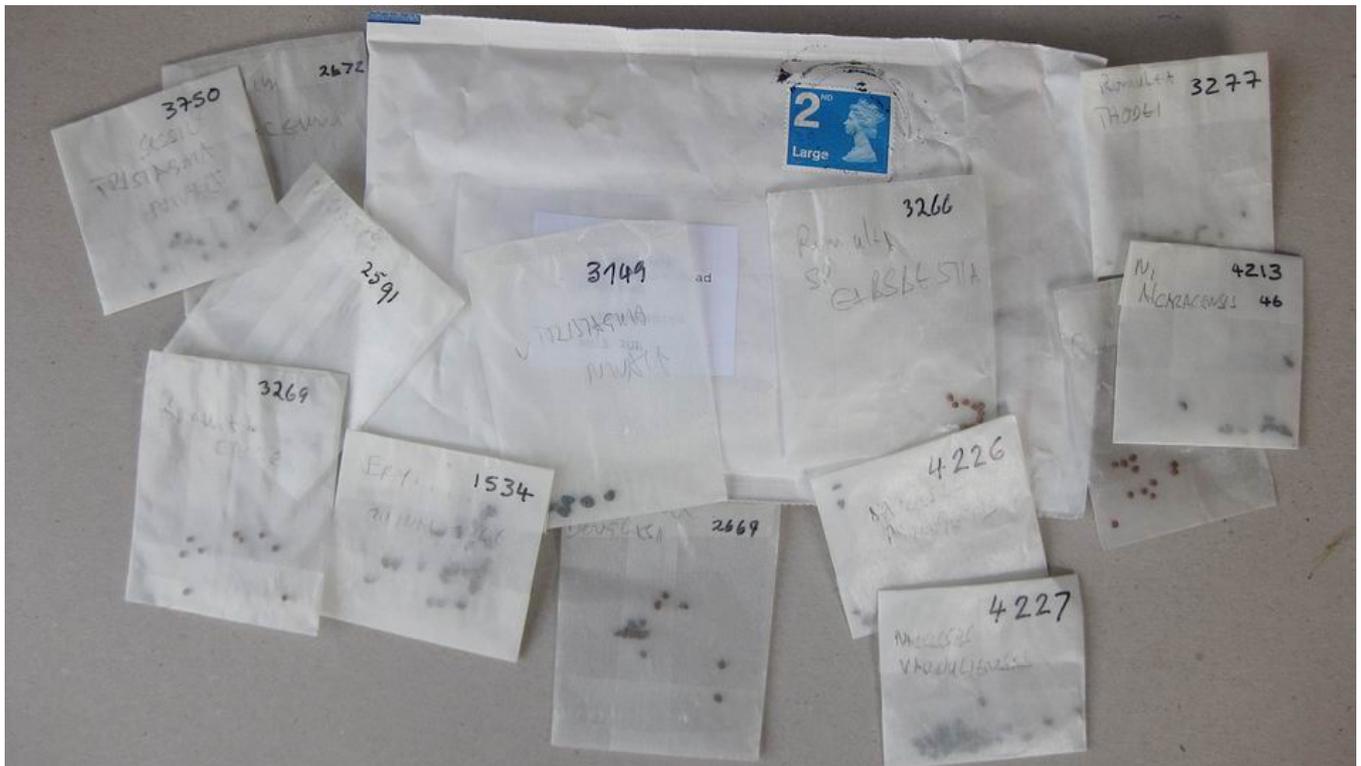
Galanthus shoots

The leaf vac also makes it possible with a little practice to lift the leaves from the beds without disturbing the mulches. This picture of Galanthus shoots shows that it will not be long before the peak of white fever is upon us – it also shows the reason why one of our most common weeds that we have to remove each year is seedling Cotoneasters. These are the berries that the birds drop as they were feeding in the snowy conditions.



Leucojum shoots

It is not only the Galanthus that will be in flower before long : the Leucojum shoots are also pushing through – come on LeucoJocks let's see how many variations and forms we can identify!



Seed Exchange

One task I must get on with now my compost has defrosted is sowing the seeds I still have in storage and would normally have sown over the Christmas period.

To add to my own seeds I have just received my SRGC Seed Exchange seeds. I would like to pay tribute and thank all the SRGC volunteers that give so freely of their time to organise every stage of this massive task as well as all the seed donors.