



Primula florindae

While we moan about our cool often wet summers in the North East of Scotland it is precisely because of those conditions that plants like *Primula florindae* grow so well for us.

All the plants that you see in these pictures have self seeded into the gravel around the paving slabs – if you look at the bottom left of the top picture you will see lots of *Primula* seedlings growing in the gaps between the slabs.

I normally leave them there until their second or third year of growth then move them in either the spring just as they start to grow or in the late summer / early autumn when the ground is nice and moist.

I will be moving the ones you can see above to one of the bulb beds in the next few weeks. This bed is looking a bit empty at the moment with nothing in flower and I hope that the *Primula florindae* will fill the gap now the summer plants have gone out of flower and before the autumn flowering bulbs appear.



Cyclamen purpurascens

There are not too many flowering bulbs in the garden just now but I can find a few such as the beautifully scented *Cyclamen purpurascens* which I think has the most beautiful, therapeutic and relaxing scent which, if you could bottle it, could be sold by the millions.



Arisaema flavum

Just beside the *Cyclamen* is a lone stem of the tiny form of *Arisaema flavum*. I have seen another form that is much larger which I must try and introduce to the garden.



***Fritillaria camschatensis aurea* seeds**

My caution when I showed the fat seed pods of *Fritillaria camschatensis aurea* in Bulb log 28 was wise as this is the total contents of the four fat seed pods. None of the seeds look particularly viable but I have sowed them in the remote chance that some might germinate – it would be so good to get some seed raised stock of this plant.



Allium pratti

There are many *Alliums* that flower around now that I must try and get more of. While they are not all the showiest of subjects they all have their charm and could extend the flowering bulb season our garden.

Allium pratti is one of the ones we do have and it happily seeds around without ever becoming a problem.



Crocus michelsonii corms

Back to the repotting of the bulbs or *replenishing* as I should perhaps call it as I am not replacing the compost. As I mentioned last week I am not tipping all the bulbs out unless I have a particular reason to check them either for health or curiosity. I wanted to see how the *Crocus michelsonii* corms were doing so here they are complete in their fibrous tunics.



Crocus michelsonii corms cleaned

It is a common question when repotting bulbs if you should remove the old tunic layers or not? In nature nobody removes them and they remain until they eventually decay plus they have obviously evolved to be of some benefit to the bulbs – perhaps retaining moisture and preventing desiccation of the corms. However in cultivation the growing conditions that I provide are far removed from the natural and my

problem is that too much moisture may be retained during the dormant season which can cause rotting of the corms. The other factor in my decision to remove these tunics is that you can see that two corms have formed in place of the old one and they will mature quicker if given a bit more space in the pot.



Crocus corms

I have shown you these Crocus corms to illustrate a point I made last week - when the growing season is cut short often by a sudden rise in temperature or by drought so the old corm does not pass all its unused food reserves on the new corm as it should. You can see clearly the one corm sitting on an old corm which should have shrivelled away to almost nothing. In this pot it was only one that had this problem so it is a bit difficult to work out what caused this corm to malfunction in this way while the others all grew normally.

Tecophilaea corms

I was surprised when replenishing this pot of Tecophilaea corms to find the compost is very wet. The answer is obvious that it was sitting under an aluminium strut in the glass house roof and water must have dripped in during the rain. The corms were nice and healthy and showed no signs of harm from this moisture but I am fairly sure that they did dry out well earlier on in the year and have only got wet



during the recent heavy rains we have been having. I have rearranged the pots so that some of the bulbs such as Crocus banaticus that prefer a moist rest are now placed in this position.



Narcissus bulbs

A similar decision of when to split or clean Narcissus bulbs has to be taken. My method is to gently rub the bulbs between my palms which both removes the loose skins and separates the bulbs that are ready to split. The separated offsets will generally grow on to flowering size quicker if removed from the competition of the parent.



Narcissus cazorlanus bulbs

From the pots I have been into so far I can report that despite the very cold winter it has been a good growing season with most bulbs having increased well. You can see from the distortion on the pot that these bulbs have added significantly to their girth this season. Needless to say as I do not have any more space to expand into I did just manage to squeeze all these bulbs back into this pot but I know that I have others to do where there is no way that I will get all the bulbs back into the pot.

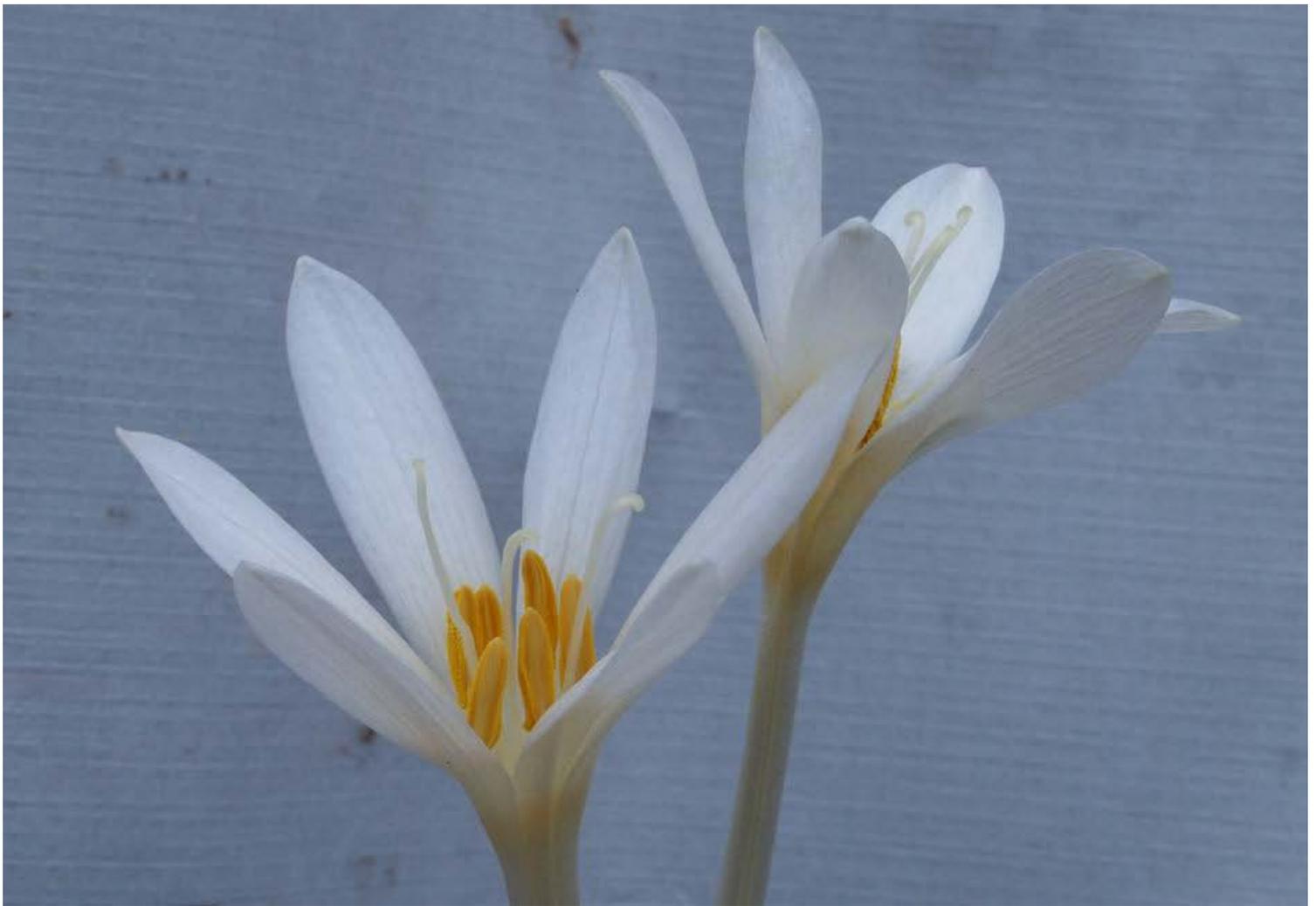


Cyclamen seedlings

It is a bit of a stretch to call these Cyclamen seedlings as they are now several years old but they have never been repotted and are still in the original seed pot. Did I repot them? Well no, because there are clear signs of growth that I did not want to damage so they will have to wait another year. Clearly these corms would have grown quicker if they had been repotted and planted out singly some years ago but it also illustrates the way bulbs can survive and adapt to these often unfavourable conditions.



Colchicum seedlings



Colchicum seedlings

I was taken by complete surprise when I went into the bulb house the other day to find these white Colchicums in flower. I grew these them from a few seeds collected in the wild 2004 they came labelled Colchicum szovitzii which they are clearly not. I will now have to try and work out what species they may be, which with the taxonomy of Colchicums, could be a bit of a problem. As always any suggestions would be welcomed – the seeds came from Turkey.



Saxifraga Trough

This is also a good time of year to assess how some of the plants in the troughs have done.

I like to see which of the many saxifrages that I have acquired over the last few years are doing best in our conditions.

It is generally easy to spot the ones that have grown well and are looking healthy.



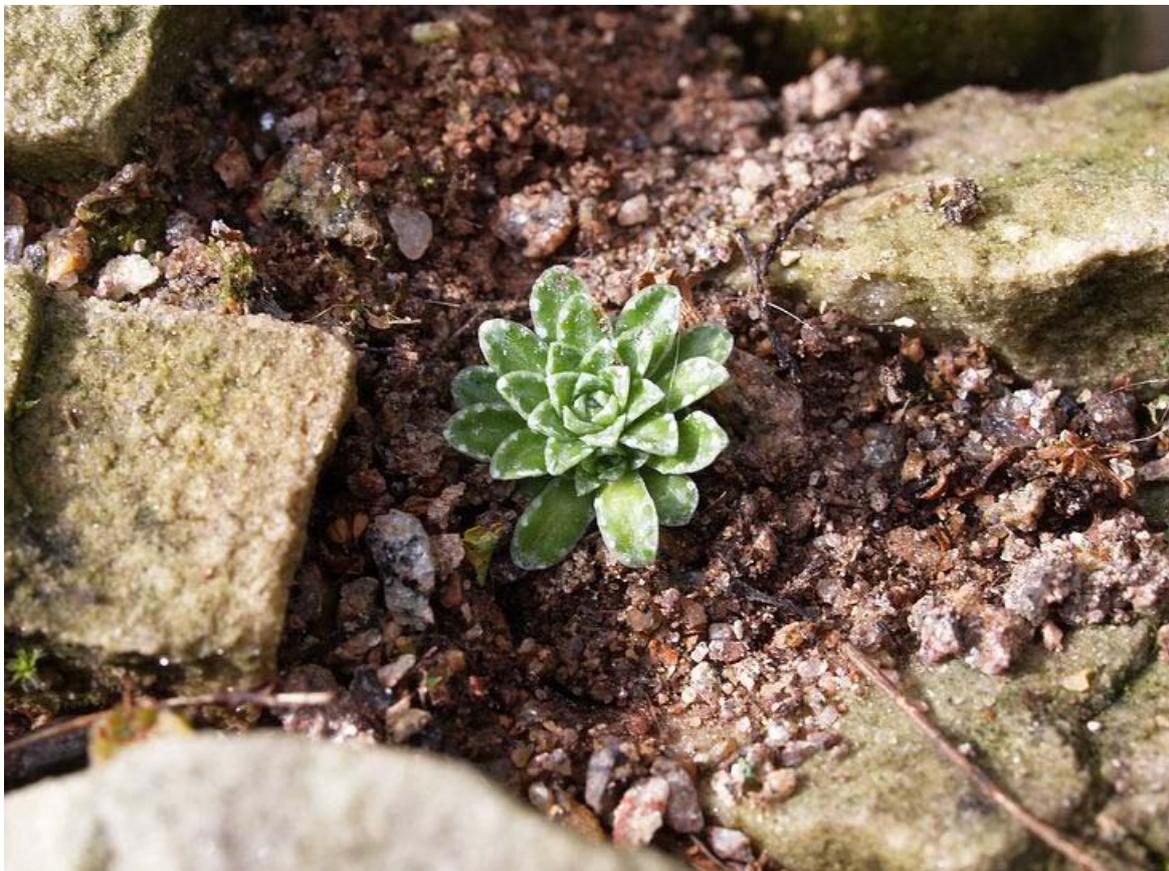
Taking cuttings

Once I assess which grow best for me I will take cuttings. I know that many people take saxifrage cuttings in the early spring or late autumn but I have found that in our climate I can take them now with a good success rate.



Saxifraga cuttings

Typical cuttings are small single stems with some of the lower leaves removed these are then just planted straight into the sharp sand that I use in place of compost in one of my troughs – see picture below



Planted saxifrage cutting

Provided it is kept shaded from long periods of direct sun and it is kept moist I find these cuttings will root quite quickly. I have some troughs that are now well established that I planted completely this way a number of years ago.



Raised bed

In this raised bed you can see another group of plants that I will take cuttings from just now – these are Androsace.



Androsace villosa jacquemontii* *A. sempervivoides* *A. sempervivoides* x *A. mucronifolia

Some of the Himalayan species are very obliging and send out runners which provide readymade cuttings.



Androsace sempervivoides* x *A. mucronifolia

Much like I did with the *Saxifraga* I just remove a small rosette. Keeping some of the runner attached helps hold the cutting into the sand when I plant it.



Trough with Androsace cuttings

I made this trough and landscaped it last year but it has sat without any plants until now because I wanted to plant it up with cuttings of the Androsaces I showed above. Now it is planted I hope that the cuttings will establish well.



Trough with Androsace cuttings

Just to help the cuttings establish and to prevent the birds pulling them out I cover the trough with a bit of horticultural fleece. I will report on their progress in future bulb logs.



I will leave you this week with another view of the troughs and raised beds shows two Himalayan plants that enjoy spreading out and falling over the edges of the raised beds that are happy and attractive companions.



Cyananthus lobatus and Hypericum reptans