



BULB LOG 11.....17th March



Galanthus nivalis and Crocus vernus Dutch cultivars

So often it is the rarities of the bulb world that attract our attention and rightly so as many of them are stunningly beautiful but we must never lose sight of the ‘common’ garden forms that are so widely grown and have been around for centuries. While the large Dutch selected forms of *Crocus vernus* would not come into the top ten *Crocus* that I would like to grow they should be represented in every garden’s spring display. They are reliable, flower every year, gradually increase and look spectacular when planted en masse in grass banks around our towns and cities. Likewise the good common snow drop – *Galanthus nivalis* in its common garden form.



I am sure that you all understand that my reputation for not liking snow drops is tongue in cheek as I think they are a wonderful addition to the winter and early spring garden and you can see from this picture that we do grow a considerable number of them.



Snow drops and snow flakes

Along with the Eranthis and Crocus it is the lovely white patches of Galanthus and Leucojum that provide most of the flowers around our garden just now giving interest to the beds before the brilliant colours of the Corydalis sweep in to take over with their hot colours. You can just see the Corydalis starting to emerge in the foreground.



Galanthus nivalis 'Viridipice'

Among the features that cause excitement among the 'Galanthophiles' are green tips to the outer petals – the stronger the colour and the more of it the better it seems.



Galanthus poculiformis

Another very sought after feature is the poculiform types which in the perfect manifestation would have the inner three petals equal in length to the outer three and even better if they could all have strong green markings on the tips of the petals. Before you move on to the next picture just take a minute to think about that description – six white petals of equal length with green markings at the tips. Galanthus heaven?



Leucojum vernum

Galanthus heaven? No Leucojum vernum – the snow flakes. As I have said for a number of years I want a group, the ‘LeucoJocks’ to champion Leucojums as the Galanthophiles have their beloved snowdrops.



Leucojum vernum var carpathicum

When you start to look at Leucojums with the same scrutiny as Galanthus you will start to see some variations. Because it is mostly only a single species that is involved with no opportunity for hybridisation to add extra variations there are likely to be fewer differences but there are a few named varieties such as 'carpathicum' which is supposed to have yellow tips. While the tips of the clump above are a more yellow/green than in the picture two above, pay attention to colour of the ovary.



Leucojum vernum var carpathicum

This close up shows clearly the contrasting yellow ovary that makes this form stand out from the crowd. This is considered a highly desirable feature in Galanthus.



You should see also the softer green of the tips (left) when compared to *L. vernum*.



Leucojum vernum var carpathicum

Then we have what is considered to be the more typical *Leucojum vernum* var *carpathicum* which has good yellow tips to the petals. All the forms that I have grown are robust and form good sized clumps. These clumps need to be split about every three to five years to prevent them becoming too congested which can cause flowering to be less prolific.



Leucojum vernum var carpathicum 'Podpolozje'

The form 'Podpolozje' typically has twin flowers when it is growing strongly. It is also interesting to me that the yellow of the tips is variable and I have never been absolutely sure what factors come to play on the hue of the tips. I have speculated that light and temperature could be factors. I split this clump last year and replanted them into a newly reworked bulb bed and these plants have a good yellow while another clump of the same clone has more greeny yellow tips so it is also possible that nutrient could also play a role.

**Leucojum vernum
var carpathicum**

This picture of a flower shows that the colour is not only variable from flower to flower but also within a single bloom as three of these tips are yellow while the other three are green/yellow – a feature that lead me to speculating that light may be a factor. I have seen this contrast even stronger in a single flower but have not got a picture.

I hope you will all look more closely at Leucojums now as well as Galanthus.



Fritillaria imperialis shoots

While the snow drops and snow flakes are the flowers of the moment the first shoots of Fritillaria imperialis are pushing through the ground – I hope they will flower.



Fritillaria house

I have not shown you any pictures from the Fritillaria house for a while – this is not because nothing is happening there but more interesting things have demanded the space in the bulb log. As an aside -I was checking back to the early Bulb logs of 2003 when an average log contained ten pictures and around five hundred words of text now the average is more like twenty five pictures and fifteen hundred words. Now back to the frits - you can see there is lots of signs of growth in the Frit house and I gave it a good watering at the end of last week to help fuel the strong growth that they are now putting on.



Narcissus cantabricus and bulbocodium

Now for some Narcissus where the various and very variable forms of Narcissus bulbocodium are appearing along with the white N. cantabricus.



**Narcissus
cantabricus
'Clusi'**

I have put 'Clusi' in brackets as I do not know if it a valid name for this form of *Narcissus cantabricus* that I got from the late Kath Dryden many years ago. I think that *N. cantabricus* is one of the most beautiful of the hoop species with its pure crystalline white petals, corona, style and filaments contrasting with the golden yellow pollen. I am sure I will show you this plant again when it is fully open.



Narcissus cantabricus

Another form of *Narcissus cantabricus* showing the profile of the flower to illustrate the way the tube tapers out gradually to a slight waist at the point where the petals are attached before expanding rapidly into a wide bowl shaped corona – to me this is a typical and very distinguishing feature of this species. One thing that has always confused me is why, with all the splitting and separation there seems to be in the hoop petticoat complex, the autumn flowering plant that we call *Narcissus cantabricus foliosus* is considered the same species as its spring flowering cousin. To me the differences are vastly more evident than some that are used as diagnostics to separate out other species. To list a few -the flowering season, number of leaves, colour of corona, style and filaments, length of pedicel. I am not a splitter but there just seems to be too many substantial differences between these plants that are used to separate out other species some of which I struggle to see the differences in. I think it is fair to say that this is an extremely confusing group that laughs at the taxonomists.



Narcissus bulbocodium

The wide range and variation that can be observed within the species *Narcissus bulbocodium* further illustrates the problems the hoop petticoat narcissus pose to the taxonomists who are trying to make sense of a group of plants that are highly promiscuous to say the least.



Narcissus bulbocodium

Some, like this form, verge towards *Narcissus romieuxii* and if you do not look carefully you can become very confused and if you look very carefully you definitely become confused.



Narcissus bulbocodium

This form of *Narcissus bulbocodium* is from seed collected originally in Morocco and is a delightful plant with small flowers on relatively long stems.

The stems are undoubtedly pulled up by the low light levels in Aberdeen and the fact that this plant is growing in close competition in our plunge with several other leafy *Narcissus*.



I have other forms that have small flowers on short stems like the one in the picture five above of the bulb house and I also have large flowered forms on short stems.

Some have exerted styles and or stamens and some have them contained entirely within the corona.



Narcissus bulbocodium

These detailed shots of the form above show a strong green stripe running from the base of the tube to the ends of the petals – an attractive feature.



Narcissus 'Minicycla' and Narcissus cyclamineus x 'Minicycla'

Narcissus 'Minicycla' is a cross between *Narcissus asturiensis* and *N. cyclamineus* that has been around for a very long time. Perhaps its age and the constant division of the bulb has weakened this cultivar or perhaps it is the way I grow it but I have never found it increases very quickly or is that strong a grower. A number of years ago I decided to cross the hybrid back onto *Narcissus cyclamineus* resulting in the flower to the right with more reflexed petals.



Narcissus cyclamineus x 'Minicycla'

This is my pot of the back cross which unlike the pollen parent is a good grower increasing steadily over the last few years.

I have never got any seed set on 'Minicycla' itself but this cross does show that the pollen can be used to successfully fertilise other species even though there were very few seeds in the capsule – only three.



Narcissus perez chiscanoi

These two photographs of the same form of *Narcissus perez chiscanoi* again illustrate the different colours that are recorded by the camera under differing light conditions – sunshine on the left and heavy cloud on the right. This plant is closely allied and may even be synonymous with *Narcissus hispanicus*.



Narcissus perez chiscanoi x *N. cyclamineus*

These pictures are of hybrid between *Narcissus perez chiscanoi* and *Narcissus cyclamineus* and are taken under the same two light conditions as above. An interesting cross that I made that shows a varying range of characteristics between the two parent species. I will leave you with a colourful and welcome visitor to the garden.

