



BULB LOG 47.....23 November 2010



Waxwings

We are delighted to have some large flocks of Waxwings in our area just now. As fruit eaters they have been attracted to the many berry trees in our garden but so far they have not settled in to gorge on them. With the x14zoom lens on my new pocket camera I captured this picture- part of a group of them at the top of a large tree just across from our house. It should not be long before they descend on the *Sorbus hupehensis* berries in the picture below.



***Sorbus hupehensis* berries**



Sorbus hupehensis

My love of growing plants from seed also extends to trees and I have raised most of the trees in our garden from seed. It may sound like a long term project but you would be surprised how quickly a tree will mature from a seedling especially if you prick it out directly into the situation you want it to occupy. The growth of seedlings planted in this way will more often than not overtake a larger bought ‘containerised’ tree planted at the same time as the seedling.



Cotoneaster

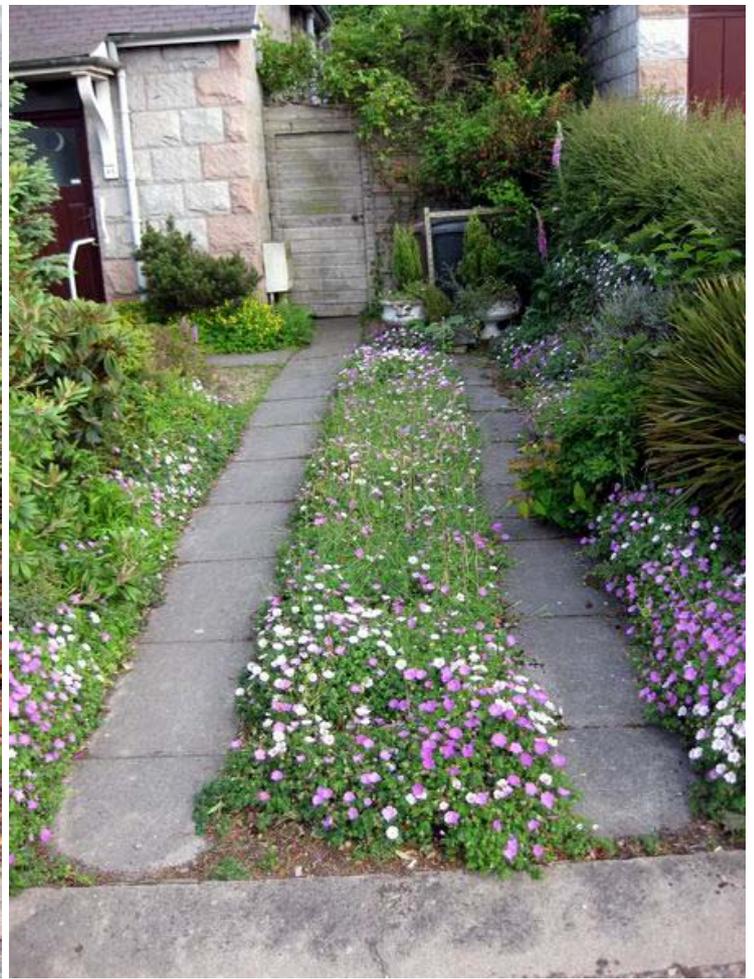
We have a lot of Sorbus and Cotoneaster trees to provide berries for the birds. Unless we get some severe cold the Cotoneaster trees will hold on to their leaves until the spring before they drop.



Acers from seed.

These are hybrid Acer trees that I raised from seed from a bonsai *Acer aconitifolium* in our garden. They hang on to their leaves well into November much later than our other Acers. The picture above left and the one below were taken to show the yellow colour and the one on the right was taken one day later. A night of strong wind with heavy rain and hail brought two thirds of the leaves down.



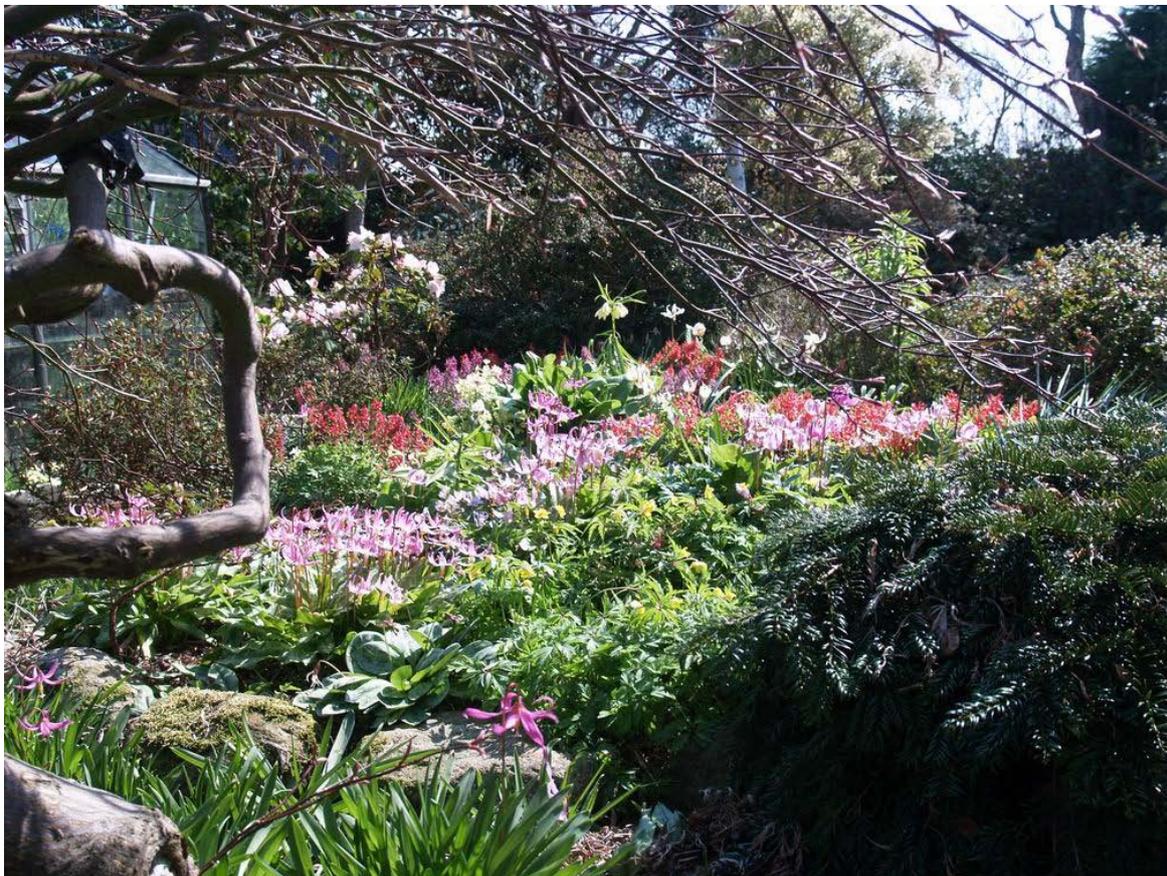


Front Drive

Of course it is not the end of the tale when the leaves fall to the ground as they then need to be collected up and placed into a nice heap to form leaf mould for our potting mixes -just as soon as the weather allows that is my next task. On the left above you can see our front drive gravel bed has attracted a lot of leaves and as the *Geranium sanguineum* and most other plants have now died back I can strip it back to the gravel so it looks relatively tidy for the winter and is ready for the spring display of bulbs -I have added a comparison picture of the summer display.



Autumn bed



Spring bed

The two pictures above taken from a similar view point show how a bed changes as the year and the seasons progress. My aim with these beds is to have an ever changing picture providing flower colour and interest throughout the year. To achieve this you need to select plants that will grow happily in the same conditions, each of which has a defined season of interest and none should be too vigorous and dominant.



Cyclamen leaves

The most difficult season to keep interest in this type of 'timeshare' bed is the winter and foliage plants are often the answer.

Cyclamen are good on a number of counts. Cyclamen hederifolium provides flowers late in the summer and then their new leaves appear with all their variations to clothe the otherwise bare ground all winter. They seem to take no harm from the rush of the spring growth overgrowing them and so make perfect companion plants.



Dwarf conifers

Dwarf conifers are also very useful for providing some structure and all year round display. However as they occupy they ground they grow in all through the year round they need to be used as spot or focal plants. Choosing true dwarf conifers is important and these will be expensive and very small when you buy them – that is their nature. I have a number of plants of *Chamaecyparis obtusa* ‘Nana’ and ‘Minima’ which I root from cuttings – the plant in the foreground is at least 15 years old from a cutting and is about 15cm high.



***Cyclamen cilicium* seedlings**

On the seed front these seedling leaves are from some *Cyclamen cilicium* seeds that I sowed in September. I first soaked the seeds in water overnight then sowed them deep - half way down the pot - and already I am getting a good germination.

Galanthus reginae olgae

I have for the meantime given up on trying to establish forms of *Galanthus reginae olgae* in the open garden. None I have tried over the years have survived outside in our garden. I am resigned to having to grow them in the bulb house where we now have a number of different forms flowering which I have been cross pollinating in the hope of getting seeds. Then from those seedlings I may eventually get a form that will survive our garden.

This is a dinky form as the picture with my finger below shows.



Galanthus reginae olgae

Here is the same form as above beside another more normal sized form. It would be lovely if this was a true miniature form and not just a seasonal aberration – I have marked the label and will find out next year.



Galanthus peshmenii

Another species in flower just now is *Galanthus peshmenii* – in fear of ‘white fever’ I will move quickly on.



Narcissus cantabricus foliosus

More Narcissus buds are slowly pushing through the gravel with slowly being the operative word – due to the cold weather. Many of the pots are starting to look a bit dry now and I need to water them soon, however the forecast is

for a very cold front to move in from the north so I will not soak the pots just yet. Luckily at this time of year you have a reasonable window of time to water the plants especially when it is cold and dull and transpiration is slow. However as soon as a mild front moves in I will be giving all the pots with leaf growth a good soaking.



Narcissus cantabricus foliosus

The side view of the same flower shows the lovely long elegant funnel shape of the corona.



It is about a month since I first showed pictures of this group of **Colchicum agrippinum** which as soon as one set of flowers fades it sends up yet another floral display.



Rhododendron decorum

It often causes worry to gardeners when their Rhododendron leaves turn yellow and drop off. What you have to realize is that while many Rhododendrons are evergreen their leaves do not last forever. Some hold on to their leaves for two or three years while others last just over twelve months like the form of Rhododendron decorum seen above. This year's leaves are nicely green and healthy while the leaves that were produced a year past spring are turning yellow and dropping off – this is perfectly natural behavior.



Berries

The strong winds have blown some clusters of berries to the ground where they will be eaten by the birds when they have devoured all those on the trees – now to wait with my camera for the Waxwings to come into the garden.