



BULB LOG 36.....8th September 2010



Cyclamen hederifolium

As a result of my continued scattering of seed over many years *Cyclamen hederifolium* flowers are appearing all around the garden and it seems to be the white forms that do best for us – they certainly come into flower earlier.





Cyclamen hederifolium

Using the scatter gun approach of spreading lots of seed in the hope that some will land in a suitable site and be adaptable to our local weather is as close as I can get to imitate what happens in nature. Normally I sow seeds in the very controlled environment of a pot where I expect a near 100% germination but nature sheds a large number of seeds in the hope that at least one or two will grow.

If you think that to maintain the natural population and its lineage all a plant has to do in its life time is to produce one offspring that survives to maturity - any more than that and the population will expand.

If all the seeds that nature produced grew successfully they would very quickly run out of space.

Scattering the seeds in a number of different environments around the garden and letting nature take its course means that those seedlings which do grow on will have a genetic tolerance to the situation they landed in and of our gardens conditions in general.

As well as having a variable tolerance to growing conditions the seedlings have a remarkable variation in flower shape from short tubby forms to long elegant forms.



***Arisaema ciliatum* seed head**

The advancing season also sees the swelling and ripening of other fruits and seed pods such as these *Arisaema ciliatum* berries supported on the handsome foliage of *Vaccinium nummularia*.



Arisaema intermedium* and *A. nepenthoides

The distinctive angular fruits of *Arisaema intermedium* on the left have not yet turned red and contrast with the early ripening berries on bright red *Arisaema nepenthoides*.



Colchicum tessellated hybrid

The Colchicums continue to make their annual display and this tessellated hybrid is not only one of the earliest to flower in our garden , it also increases well ,like most of the hybrid colchicums.



**Colchicum
tessellated hybrid**

The substantial goblet shaped flowers make for a very handsome display and they look good either planted as individual bulbs or in clumps. Of course you only have individuals the first year after replanting but they soon bulk up to form a clump. Each bulb also produces a number of flowers.



Colchicum tessellated hybrid

In the sunshine they are a real attraction to masses of insects - mostly the various different hoverflies that appear in large numbers at this time of year.



Colchicum montanum

In the bulb house more flowers have appeared from a pot of *Colchicum montanum* formally known as *Merendera*) I have yet to try growing this outside without protection but I will put some out the next time I replot them in my attempt to reduce the number of plants in pots that I have to look after.



Crocus kotschyanus

The first *Crocus kotschyanus* flower of the year has also made an appearance in the bulb house this week, heralding the start of what I hope will be a long and floriferous period.



Sternbergia sicula

These two pictures of *Sternbergia sicula* taken 12 hours apart show again the speed that the autumn bulbs can leap into full flowering mode. It also opens another chapter in my annual quest to try and find out what exactly *Sternbergia sicula* "is" and which of the many forms that I have built up is the best suited to flower in our cooler climes.



Fritillaria kotschyana bulbs

Whenever I have time I am working at repotting or at least topdressing the Fritillaria bulbs. I like to carefully knock out the compost to reveal the bulb layer without actually disturbing the bulbs so I can do a basic health check. In this pot of Fritillaria kotschyana all the signs are good as the bulbs look clean and healthy and most have produced the elongated stoloniferous offset typical of this species.

As with the rest of the bulbs I add a pinch of rock dust and bone meal to enrich the compost for next season. I am often amazed at just how long it takes for my brain to process information – no rude comments now, I am my own biggest critic. It is only just now that I have linked the specific names of two of my favourite plants *Crocus kotschyanus* and *Fritillaria kotschyana* perhaps I can offer the excuse that as they flower in different seasons I am not often thinking of them at the same time.

Fritillaria bulbs

Not all the bulbs do so well -like this pot of *Fritillaria elwesii* which had gone backwards, with many of the bulbs having rotted away. It could have been that they were too wet during the worst of a very cold winter but I notice that the surviving bulbs were all at the very edge of the pot.

Here again it has taken a long time for me to process what I am observing. When we plant bulbs in a pot we tend to space them out



equally across the surface but this time I am learning nature's lesson and I am replanting these surviving pieces around the edge of the pot. This should have been obvious to me a long time ago because if I take cuttings of a plant I place them around the better drained edge of the pot where they root better. One problem with growing bulbs in plastic pots is that they can retain too much moisture and exclude air especially towards the centre so planting the bulbs around the edge should give them an obvious advantage.



Fritillaria korolkowii bulbs

Despite the fact that the compost was bone dry these *Fritillaria korolkowii* bulbs are already making roots as you can see in the picture above- however with careful handling I was able to replot them with minimal damage and the bulbs should not suffer. Talking of suffering and observing -what can you tell about the condition of these bulbs?



Fritillaria korolkowii bulbs

It becomes more obvious from this picture where the bulb on the left is completely healthy having grown well last season, as has the bulb in the middle which is an offset of the bulb on the left -however the right hand bulb has not had a good growth cycle. Instead of growing a new bulb and a good sized offset (which this form does each year) something has caused the bulb to break down into a number of almost separated scale like smaller bulbs. Breaking down into a number of smaller bulbs is a survival mechanism that many bulbs employ when they are under some kind of stress. As all these bulbs were in the same large clay pot, the only bulbs that I still grew in a clay pot, it is a bit of a mystery as to what went wrong with this bulb – except it was planted towards the centre of the pot!



Fritillaria korolkowii bulbs

I finally decided that it is time to split this pot full down so I could get them into the largest size, 13cm, of square plastic pots that I use with a few going into the garden.



Hoverfly on Colchicum

As always I spend too much time taking pictures of insects on the crocus and colchicum flowers but I cannot resist.