



BULB LOG 34.....24<sup>th</sup> August 2011



**Allium prattii** seed heads

I am happy to let the seed of *Allium prattii* self sow around the garden and I will occasionally help by scattering

some in other sites. The wider picture shows how *Allium wallichii* is self sowing in just that way creating clumps drifts establishing where the fallen seeds find suitable conditions. I remember being so impressed by this process of self-seeding in established gardens when I first started to visit them in the 1970's. Now I realise that this is a sign of maturity in both the garden and gardener.





**Allium wallichii**



**Arisaema nepanthoides**



**Eucomis bicolor**

Another thing that has always fascinated me is spotting similar forms and or colours in things, be they inanimate objects, plants, people, etc. I do not need to explain the similarity in look in these very diverse plants. I will be collecting the Arisaema seeds to sow in a pot to ensure that I get maximum germination as this is one species I am keen to build up.



### **Hepatica seedlings**

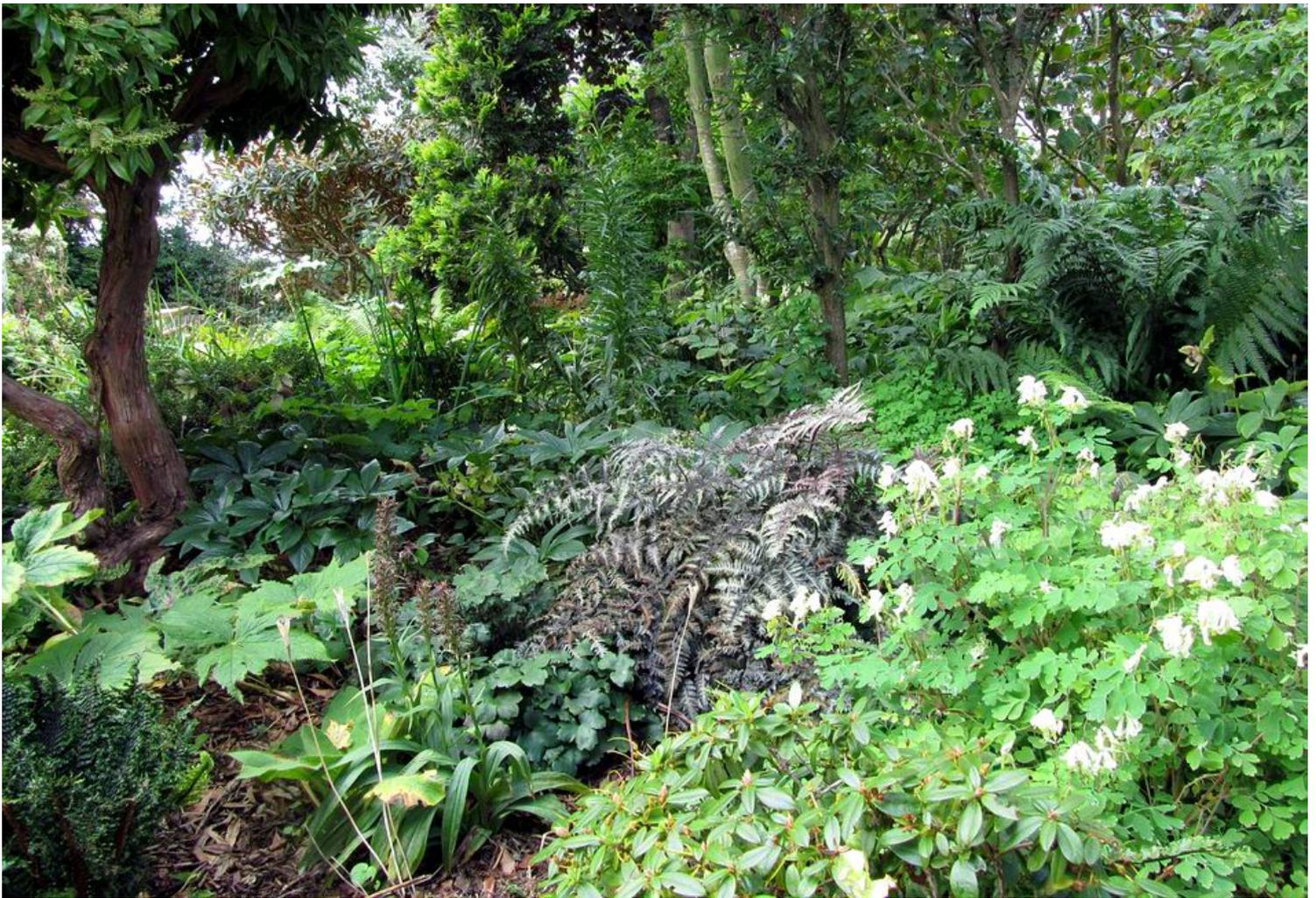
Here a mass of seedlings have germinated around the edge of the parent plant where they fell as the stem arched over. In our garden there is nothing to help disperse Hepatica seeds unless I scatter them around. When I was a young gardener I eagerly collected all the seeds from our garden carefully sowing them in pots - no wonder we did not get any naturalising. Sowing in pots should give the most successful results and I was disappointed at a germination rate of anything less than 80%. Now unless it is a special plant that I desperately want to increase in numbers I am happy to leave it to nature where hundreds of seeds may be scattered with a success rate of around 10%. I now realise that this effect is as much to do with the gardener maturing as well as the garden. The decision of which seeds I sow in pots is directly related to the number of those plants that we have as well as how much and how quickly we want to increase our stock.



### **Pseudofumaria lutea**

Some plants, such as *Pseudofumaria lutea*, seed around very freely and can quickly establish large colonies – these are often called weeds but I hesitate to call them all that as they can have a place in the garden. I love the *Pseudofumaria*, formally

*Corydalis*, species which bring welcome late colour to many of the bulb beds. I see this type of self seeder not as a weed but as one of nature's free gifts to gardeners. They are easily controlled by removing any seedlings that place themselves in unsuitable locations as well as by removing the mature flower heads before the seed is ripe.



Ferns and other foliage provides interest in this area of the garden while there are no bulbs in flower and to the right is one of the self sown plants of *Pseudofumaria alba*.



### ***Corydalis cashmeriana***

While the cold wet weather we have had this summer has not pleased the gardeners some plants are enjoying it. Many of the Himalayan plants especially that are used to summer monsoons have grown very well in the cool wet conditions. Our *Corydalis cashmeriana* is starting to produce a number of flower spikes not of the intense blue that we see in the spring flowers; these late flowers are tinged with red producing a slightly purple colour.



## **Corydalis mucronipetala**

Likewise *Corydalis mucronipetala* (left) and *C. pseudobarbisepala* (below), both of which have produced bonus flower spikes with purplish coloured flowers. I have long held the opinion that the intensity of the blue colour that we so enjoy in these *Corydalis* and also in *Meconopsis*, is conditioned by the temperature. Colder conditions produces the most beautiful clear blues and as the

temperature warms we start to see red hues coming through producing purplish shades.



## **Corydalis pseudobarbisepala**

We have relatively recently acquired these last two plants and those pictured are the only specimens that we have so any seeds that appear I eagerly collect and sow into a pot to maximise the germination rather than allowing them to self seed as I do with many of the other *Corydalis* species and forms we grow.



### **Hole!!**

While getting down to take the pictures of the *Corydalis* I noticed some small holes had been dug in this bed and I could see the chewed remains of a bulb at the bottom of this hole. Something – a mouse- has developed a taste for my bulbs and I will not tolerate that. I do have a policy of biodiversity and I am happy to share my garden with all forms of fauna with one simple condition – it can not eat my bulbs. Obviously the mouse population has increased and in the absence of any natural predators I have taken steps to redress the balance.



***Crocus vallicola***

It is vital to control the mice problem before they turn their attentions to the beautiful *Crocus vallicola* that are just opening their flowers now. I carefully exposed and framed the picture above left to show the shadow cast by the style onto the floral segments while the other picture, right, shows how in some forms the violet lines are strong enough to be seen from the outside. The flower on the left also has the violet lines as you can see in the picture below but they are not visible from the outside.



***Crocus vallicola***



The first of the ***Cyclamen hederifolium*** are now opening.



**Cyclamen hederifolium**



**Cyclamen hederifolium album**



### **Cyclamen purpurascens**

For a long time the only *Cyclamen purpurascens* we grew were from our own seed collected from a single bought plant. All the resulting seedlings were pretty uniform with plain dark green leaves and much the same shade of pink flowers. Luckily there are some very generous Bulb Log readers out there and over the last few years I have had gifts of both seeds and small seedlings which have introduced some lovely leaf forms with different flower shapes and hues to our stock as the additional pictures below illustrate.





## **Cyclamen purpurascens**

While those in the picture above have varying degrees of leaf markings the most extreme one has almost all silver leaves with just a rim of checked dark green. Now with this added genetic mix I look forward to much more variable variety in our seedlings.

I will not leave any seeds from these forms to nature's way but will collect them to sow in pots to maximise the germination and success rate.

Sometimes you introduce plants which you may later regret. *Tropaeolum speciosum* is a very beautiful climber from South America and it is one of those plants that you either want to grow and can't or you have got it and can't get rid of it. It just loves our moist humus rich soil, seeding around with gay abandon which in many circumstances would not be a problem but when it grows over dwarf ericaceous shrubs, including *Rhododendrons*, it can kill them in a very short time. This sort of behaviour does not fit into my 'timeshare' style of gardening were I pack in as many compatible plants into as small an area as I can.

## **Tropaeolum speciosum**

We are quite happy to allow it to grow up through many of the larger shrubs and small trees which are not damaged by the cloak of *Tropaeolum* but we have to remove it relentlessly from the sensitive dwarfs.





**Celmisia** has a reputation for not setting much viable seed, especially in cultivation, but that is not always the case. We have a number of self sown *Celmisia* seedlings around the gravel areas of the garden. These seed heads look to have viable seeds and I will collect some to sow in a pot to confirm this and to give me an idea of the percentage of seed that is fertile. Fortunately this plant also produces occasional late flowers as the seed heads from the spring flowering are just ripening, allowing me to enjoy them side by side.

