



BULB LOG 49.....7th December 2011



Bulb house

Having had unseasonably mild conditions in November the temperatures have now dropped to below freezing.



Cyclamen pots

This means that we are now entering winter and can expect much more of the cold conditions. Undoubtedly these periods will be intermixed with more mild weather. My first tasks are to get the potted Cyclamen which have been lying outside in trays to take the weather under the protection of the glasshouse. In previous years I have kept the Cyclamen under glass all year round only watering them as I do for the other bulbs. They have survived that treatment but they grow better when kept moist all through the summer and the best way to do that is to let them take the rain.



Frost on Cyclamen leaves

There is no question that the Cyclamen that we still grow in pots are hardy enough as they have been through many a cold winter with just a glasshouse for protection - some have even lived outside all winter. The species involved here are mostly *Cyclamen mirabile*, *C. intaminatum* and *C. coum* all of which flower best for us when given cold glass protection through the winter. When I see plants whose leaves react to the frost by curling up, becoming dark or just flopping over, I take it as a sign that it has evolved with some exposure to regular freezing and so have developed such strategies to protect their cells. The leaves of frost tender plants just tend to go brown and die when exposed to freezing conditions.



Cyclamen coum flower

Two pictures of the same flower from different angles show the need for us to get close and examine our plants.



Narcissus bulbocodium



Narcissus bulbocodium

I have a few forms of *Narcissus bulbocodium* in flower just now which differ from its close relative *N. romieuxii* in a number of ways - the most obvious difference to the grower at least is the colour - *Narcissus bulbocodium* flowers are usually of a richer yellow.

Another difference is in the leaves with *N. bulbocodium* mostly having slightly wider flatter leaves with a different cross-section to forms of *N. romieuxii*. To all but the experienced botanists these differences are often very subtle and many of the classified names are difficult to relate to much of what we grow in cultivation.

Luckily they are all beautiful and worth growing. Easy to identify at this time of year is *Narcissus* 'Cedric Morris' a robust very early flowering form of *N. asturiensis* - picture below.

These are the first flowers opening in the bulb house some three or four weeks after the ones in the open garden came into flower.

Because this form appears to be sterile the flower never gets the message that it has served its purpose when the seed is fertilised and so it is the longest lasting *Narcissus* flower we have - it just goes on and on for months.



Narcissus 'Cedric Morris'



Narcissus romieuxii

Two pots of *Narcissus romieuxii* side by side show some of the difference in flower shape and size. The form on the right with the large flat faced flowers is from the famous JCA805 collection – the other is from another old collection.



Narcissus romieuxii

I am just going to let some of these pictures talk for themselves as I share the beauty of these flowers with you. While *Narcissus cantabricus foliosus* has a beautiful scent I cannot detect any scent on any pure *Narcissus romieuxii* so in my opinion any scented forms are hybrids.



Narcissus romieuxii



Narcissus romieuxii



Narcissus albidus

The side view of one of the forms we have as variable as *Narcissus albidus*, *N. romieuxii albidus*, etc. this form is distinct in that it has the flange on the corona. One difference in the forms that we have as *N. albidus* is that the style and filaments are also pure white while *N. romieuxii* has slightly yellow coloured filaments and style – as you will see in the pictures above.



Note the green tips to the petals on this form of *N. albidus*



Narcissus albidus with pure white filaments and style



Narcissus romieuxii with yellowish filaments and style

Confused? I am!



Narcissus

While I amuse myself trying to spot the subtle differences and working out from the literature that is available to me what species and or hybrids we might have, all that is necessary is to look after and enjoy them as they flower through the winter months.



Narcissus 'Don Stead'

A friend was worried because her pot of Narcissus 'Don Stead' was already in flower some three months ahead of recent years when it would be just coming into flower at the end of February – ours are also appearing early. There is nothing we can do as the flowering period is determined by the temperature after the first watering and the roots start to form. If it is mild the bulbs will start to grow and flower if it is cold they grow very slowly and will flower as the temperatures start to rise in late winter. Some species always wait until February or later to flower and these most likely need a slightly higher temperature to trigger flowering.



***Fritillaria davidii* seedlings**

The *Fritillaria davidii* seed that I got from Darren Sleep continues to grow and as Darren also shows in the forum the young seedlings have now put up a second leaf - this is very unusual as fritillaria usually only produce a single seed leaf in their first year after germination.



Fritillaria yumenensis

I find that many of the Chinese frits have a life cycle very different from the 'Mediterranean' types that we are more familiar with in cultivation in that they seem to do best when not dried out in the summer. *Fritillaria yumenensis* is just starting to push above ground earlier than I have seen it before. I have always wondered why there are no autumn flowering fritillarias when most of the other bulb genera from similar habitat, *Narcissus*, *Crocus*, *Colchicum*, *Galanthus*, etc. have both autumn and spring flowering species.



Tropaeolum azureum starts into growth soon after being watered in the autumn. Pinching the growing tip back at this stage will encourage all the side shots in the leaf axils to grow giving you more branched and better flowered plants



Arisaema seed head on frosty ground