



BULB LOG 23.....8th June 2011



Fritillaria house

There is not much to report from the bulb houses just now as most of them went into an early dormancy in the hot spell we had in April.

The big interest will come when I start to report when I will find out how the growth of the bulbs has been affected by the long cold winter and the unseasonal hot conditions of April. More of this in coming weeks plus I will reveal my new plans for the bulb house.



Tropaeolum azureum is the one plant still flowering away under glass.



Fritillaria chitralensis seed pods



The sudden heat, exaggerated by being in a small glass house, sent the bulbs into an early dormancy this meant that very few of them set any seeds. The ones that have a good seed set, like *Fritillaria chitralensis*, all flowered well before the hot spell.

The heat did not affect the ones in the garden many of which flowered after the hot spell. *Fritillaria pallidiflora* is an excellent and easy to grow bulb for the garden and it sets good seed most years.

***Fritillaria pallidiflora* seed pods**

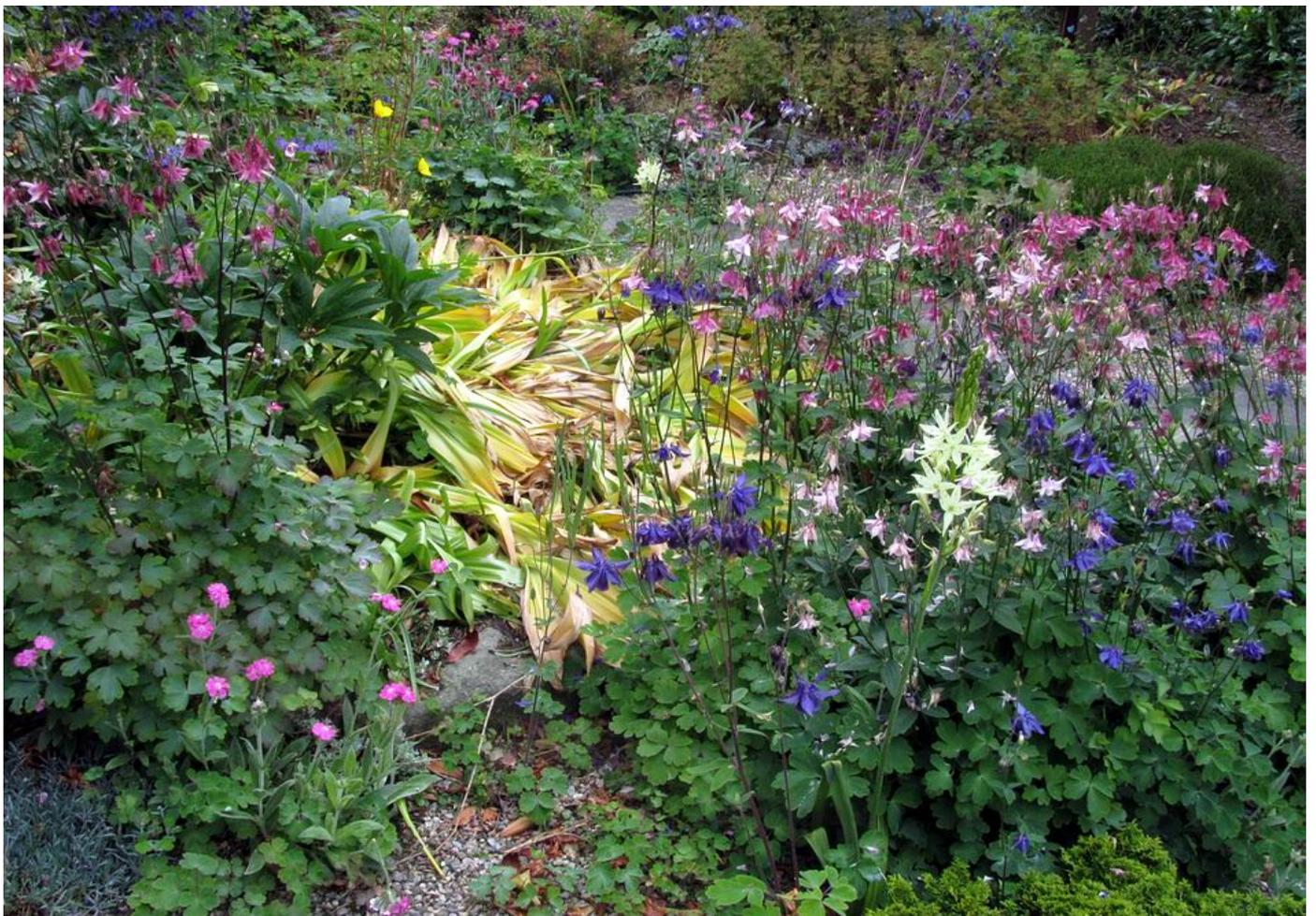


***Scoliopus bigelowii* seed pods**

Scoliopus bigelowii seed pods hide themselves under the foliage as their stems bend over to lay the seed vessel on the ground. I have often found slugs removing the seeds so it may be that they have evolved to be dispersed by some mollusc or insect. The mass of seedling leaves is a good indication that I did not collect the seeds last year.



Garden view



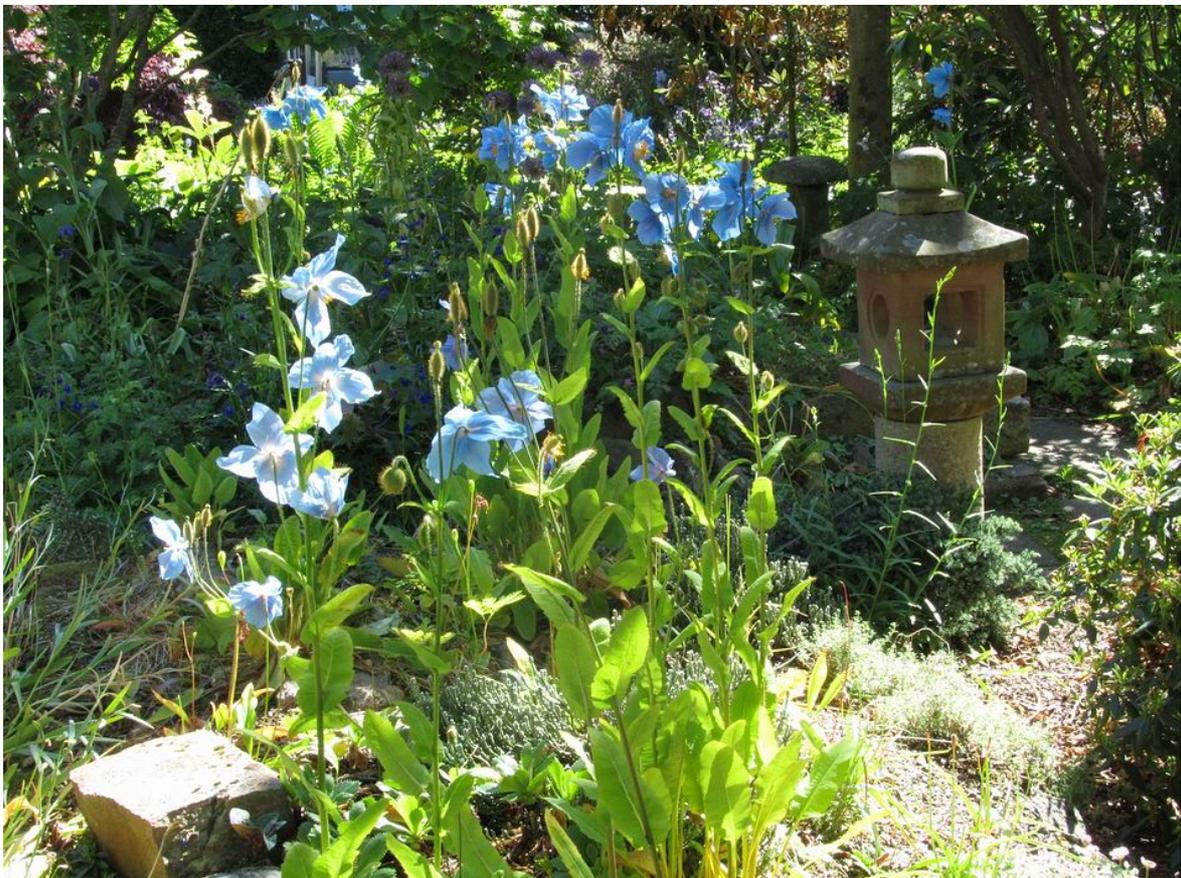
Self sown Aquilegia

Camassia leichtlinii

The mass of self sown *Aquilegia* that have taken over this area of our gravel path puts on a lovely display and it is amazing to see the variation that appears from what started out as a few plants of a blue *Aquilegia* species many years ago. They are especially useful as they draw your attention away from the yellowing foliage of the *Colchicums* which has now collapsed.

It is difficult to find compatible plants that will take over from the *Colchicum* from now until they start to flower from late August but the *Aquilegia* are probably big enough to grow up through the collapsing foliage so I have been transferring some of the smaller seedlings. The other plants that I am trying include the *Camassia* - here a white one has also self seeded into the gravel – not to forget the *Alliums* that I showed last week.

Who needs seed pots and frames when any seeds that find their way into the gravel paths seem to germinate and grow away so readily?



Bulb bed

In one of the rock garden type bulb beds *Meconopsis betonicifolia*, or *M. baileyi* as we are told it should again be called, also self seeds all around the garden especially where there is a gravel surface like on this bulb bed.



Meconopsis baileyi

I love this hue of blue and am very happy to have these majestic plants sharing the bulb beds. When the spring bulbs are flowering there is no sign of the poppies, it is only when the bulb foliage is dying down that they start to make their appearance. Not all of the seedlings come up this fabulous colour - some are a purple like the one below. I know some like this colour but I tend to weed them out and I certainly would not allow them to set seeds.





Meconopsis nepalensis

Other Meconopsis are now taking their turn to feature in the time share beds - such as the lovely forms of Meconopsis nepalensis seen both above and below in the yellow and pink forms of the species.





Meconopsis cambrica

Meconopsis cambrica is often referred to as a weed just because it seeds around freely and seems to adapt to most growing conditions, however hostile they may seem to us - I often see it growing out of walls of derelict buildings. I think this makes it a great plant and takes me back to the reasons that I grow my dandelion and why I think it is so good. There is no such thing as a bad plant in this respect - just bad gardeners who do not control their plants and that can be applied to many of the so called invasive species. Rhododendron ponticum, particularly in the West Coast of Scotland, comes to mind where this wonderful plant is criticised for being too successful – if only the land owners who planted it and their successors controlled it better there would not be a problem. Much of it was probably the root stock of a grafted cultivar which through bad management was allowed to take over from the less vigorous cultivar. Interestingly some years ago I read that a scientific team took sediment samples from the bottom



of an Irish loch and one of the plants they identified from the pollen was Rhododendron ponticum suggesting that it was at one time in the interglacial periods, a native of the British Isles. Back to the Welsh Poppy: I am happy to let it seed around in selected areas where its succession of yellow flowers is very welcome. Unwanted seedlings are easily removed and if you do not want it to take over then do not let it seed or at least control it.

Celmisia and Dactylorhiza

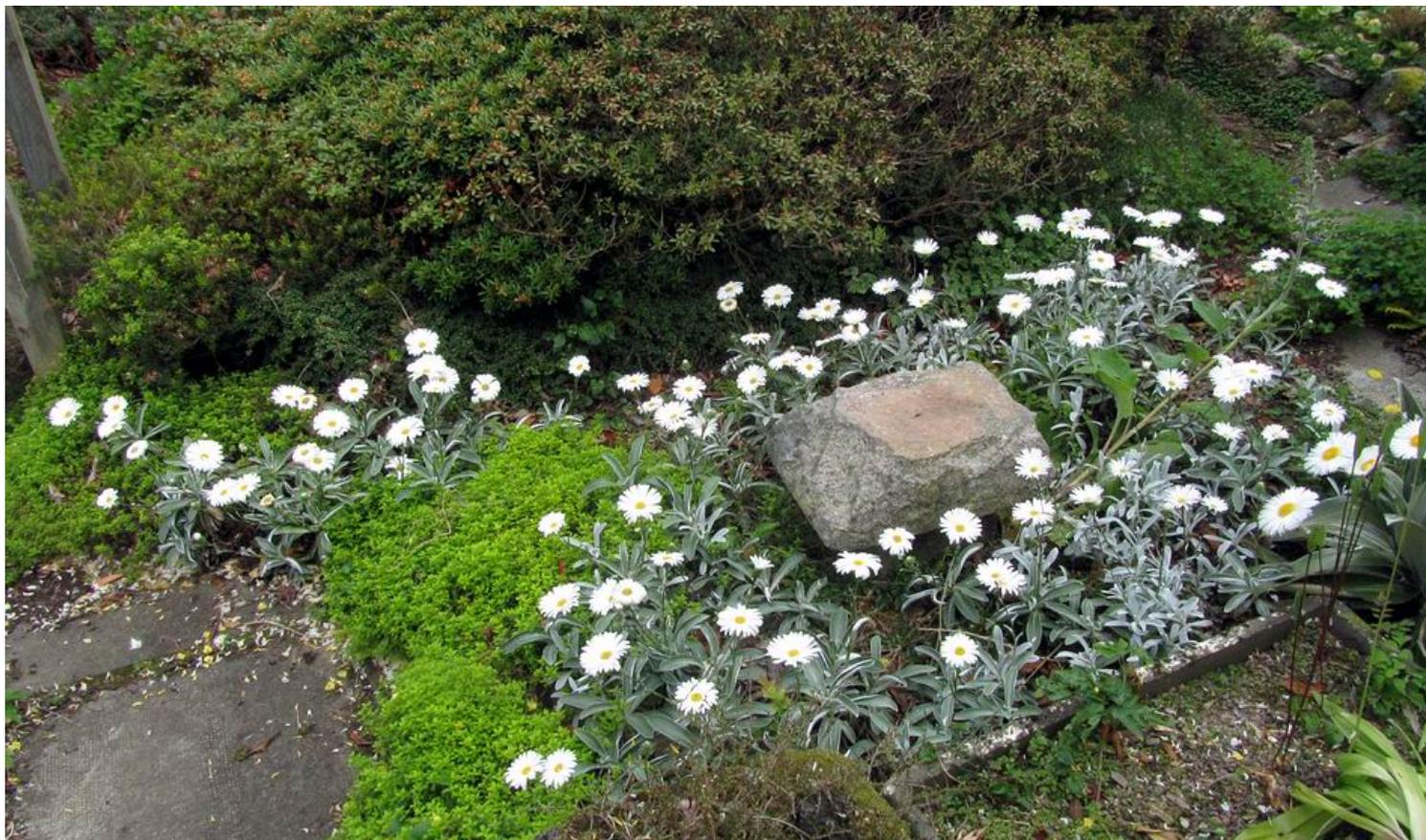
Celmisia and Dactylorhiza are not a plant association that you will find anywhere in the wild but it is one that works in our garden. This grouping was almost accidental as I had a few Dactylorhiza, self sown into a pot of seedlings, needing a permanent home and this spot seemed to have some spare space.

Now the orchids are doing so well I will need to split them up later in the year. There are three species of Celmisia in this group or at least, three different ones, as some of the species are very difficult to identify with hybridization happening even in the wild.

Celmisia spectabilis is one – its flower is the one on the right in the picture below with **C. petriei** on the left.



Celmisia flowers



Celmisia species

We are very lucky that so many Celmisias grow very well in our garden - some species spread into great mats taking over the paths. Some people might cut them back or take them out for not obeying the rules of the gardener but with their glorious silver foliage who could resist them and I am always happy to go with the plants and visitors just have to walk the long way round – plants rule OK. The species here are *Celmisia incana* – the smaller very silver leaved one, *C. semicordata* – the large one at the extreme right and I have never managed to put a name on the one to the leaf with grayish green leaves and large flowers that you can see below – it bears some resemblance to *C. bonplandii* but I am not sure, perhaps it is a hybrid.



Celmisia ? flowers



Celmisia ? showing foliage

I would be grateful for any suggestions as to the identity of this plant.



Celmisia semicordata

Some will decry the Celmisias for having all white flowers but I think they are beautiful and so many have such wonderful foliage that is both evergreen and highly decorative making them extremely useful plants to have in the garden.



Lilium mackliniae

Above and below are two variations of *Lilium mackliniae* - the one above has a deep blackcurrant coloured throat while the one below has a dark green throat.

