



BULB LOG 20.....18th May 2011



I am very conscious that we have witnessed a very compressed flowering season for the spring bulbs. The cold winter followed by a sudden very warm spell in April has meant that lots of bulbs whose flowering would maybe overlap for a few days most springs, all flowered together this year. This means that I have a lot of pictures of plants that I have not shown in the bulb log. The Trilliums are mostly past their best now but a few still look good.





Trillium grandiflorum double and Trillium grandiflorum roseum



Trillium grandiflorum roseum opens up the most beautiful pink and as the flower fades the pink starts to fade out. This is the complete opposite to the normal white forms that open white and turn pink and even purple as the flowers fade.

The pure white double forms of Trillium grandiflorum are always the last of this species to flower and they too turn shades of pink and purple as the flowers progress.



Large Leaves

Now to revisit some the 'Time Share beds' - here the *Corydalis* foliage has now died down and it is some of the bigger leaves that are featuring. Two *Cardiocrinum giganteum* plants can be seen in this picture both are the same age but only the one on the left is flowering this year.

When I planted them out in this position I imagined them both flowering together but as the main bulb will die after flowering it is no bad thing that one flowers this year leaving the other to flower next year.

If the conditions are favourable - that means a good moist humus rich soil - the flowering bulb will produce a number of offsets. If it is too hot and or too dry then it gives up all its food resources to flowering and cannot get sustenance from the dry ground to supplement the growth of offsets.





Arisaema griffithii

Among the happy neighbours sharing this well planted bed is *Arisaema griffithii* which as well as having decorative leaves has the wonderful flower that from some angles can resemble the head of a cobra snake rising up as it prepares to strike its prey - hence its common name of 'Cobra Lily'.



Arisaema griffithii

Here you can see the flower contrasting this time with the leaves of a *Meconopsis*.



Arisaema nepenthoides

Arisaema are a very valuable group of plants in my 'Time Share' beds for a number of reasons first is that many of them come into flower around now just as the busy early season is subsiding. The second reason is that they are highly decorative and unusual plants with striking flowers foliage and stems and the third is that they can cope with growing up rising through other lower growing plants that provide a wonderful contrast.



Arisaema nepenthoides

I love the contrast here of Arisaema nepenthoides against the fern both looking like they could have been lifted out of the Jurassic period.



Arisaema nepenthoides

If sown at the optimum time bulbous seeds should start to germinate and start into growth when the parent plants are still flowering. These seedlings are still in the original seed pot and should really be repotted but, as they are a reasonable size and into their second year, I will plant them directly out into the garden later this year



Eranthis hyemalis



The stems of the Eranthis are flopping over and will soon die back but before they do they need to shed their seeds. I will help them disperse the seed by scattering it into other areas of the garden that I noted needed cheering up early in the year. When 'Time Share' gardening it is important to note what is flowering in each bed as we go through the year and more importantly where there is some space – or at least some bare ground that could support another plant. Some beds like those above that are full of growth just now could be bare when the Eranthis would flower so that is where I am scattering these seeds. Carefully pushing my hand under the foliage and scattering them on the ground.



Colchicum leaves

Colchicums often receive unkind criticism because of their foliage – this is quite unfair in my view and I would not want to miss the wonderful display of Colchicum flowers in late summer/early autumn when many plants have long passed their best. Careful consideration of where you are planting Colchicums is important - remember that their leaves are in maximum growth around now. The early flowering bulbs such as Corydalis can cope as they have all died back now. The leaves of Helebores are also big enough to compete and the Colchicum leaves are not a problem earlier when the Helebores are flowering. One combination I have been building on is planting some of the taller growing Alliums with the Colchicums. These Alliums produce their leaves very early and by the time the flowers emerge the leaves are often dying back and looking quite brown and scruffy so now I have the Allium stems rising up through the colchicum leaves and interesting and attractive combination.



Alliums stems

For some reason a number of the Allium stems in this bed have withered as they emerge above the Colchicum leaves. I am not sure if this is a fungal or an environmental problem caused by the high winds and frosts we have recently experienced



‘Time Share Bed’

This is another area where *Corydalis solida* dominated in the early part of the year and for now it is filled with a combination of *Trillium*, *Paris*, *Dicentra*, the larger *Corydalis* species and hybrids plus Blue Bells.



Blue Bells

This is *Hyacinthoides hispanicus*, a lovely plant, but if you don't want it to take over it does need some controlling.



Fritillaria pyrenaica and camschatensis

The later flowering Fritillaria like *F. pyrenaica* and *F. camschatensis* are also good to take over in the beds. They rise up above the *Corydalis* foliage and flower as it collapses and quickly dies away.

Fritillaria pontica below is another of the later flowering species that adapts well to most garden conditions.



Fritillaria pontica



Fritillaria affinis

I have never been tempted to have colour co-ordinated beds where all the flowers and foliage match – I like the way nature plants all colours mixed together. However sometimes accidental combinations appear like this *Fritillaria affinis* flowering in a pot in the seed frame with a red leaved Beech tree growing in a concrete trough placed out of the way beside the frame and in the background there is a red Acer.



Fritillaria camschatensis

This species occurs both in Asia and North America this is one of the Asian forms.

It is a startling flower which in certain lights can look to be deepest black.



As far as I know there is no truly black flower – they are all deepest red/brown which can be seen most clearly when back lit. This view also shows of the ridges that run down the floral segments giving them a substantial structure.



Fritillaria camschatensis

While most of the Asian forms that I have seen are black I have raised some from seed that have a small amount of green appearing.



***Fritillaria camschatensis* Alaskan form**



***Fritillaria camschatensis* Alaskan forms**

The Alaskan forms can have varying degrees of brown and green and all have this very elegant sweep to the petals making them easily to separate from the Asian ones.





Fritillaria camschatensis

I am not sure what the true status of this form is but I received it many years ago as *Fritillaria camschatensis alpina aurea* and was told that it hailed from Japan. It is a lovely form with a good colour that is also shorter growing than any of the others I have and is clearly distinct from the other taller yellow form that I grow.



“Fritillaia camschatensis alpina aurea”