



BULB LOG 45.....9th November 2011



Crocus niveus

I wrote last week about removing the fading Crocus flowers to prevent the spread of mould and rots and now I can show you why this is so important. This flower is already starting to go past as indicted at the edges where it is becoming translucent and it will not be long before I need to pluck this flower off. You will get away with leaving the old flowers in dry conditions but as soon as it turns damp you will have problems. I have just returned from Belgium and four days away is more than enough time to allow moulds to form. The picture below shows that clearly – the remains of these flowers were all

dried out when I left and it is plain to see what a few damp days will do.





Crocus laevigatus

While this pot of *Crocus laevigatus* continues to send up new flowers you can see the quick deterioration that occurs when they start to fade. As soon as they start to shrivel they should be removed with a sharp tug upwards.



Grey mould

The biggest problem occurs when the mould infected parts land on the growing leaves like you see above – this can quickly lead to cross infection .



Grey mould

These moulds mostly grow on dead and dying plant tissue but this close up shot shows the new leaf tip starting to go yellow, a clear sign that the mould has penetrated and is now attacking the living tissue. I have an important task now to remove all these old flowers before the damage spreads.



Narcissus hybrids

The Narcissus season has got off to a flying start with many now in full bloom. This is a pot of bulbs raised from seed of the fertile hybrid Narcissus 'Camoro' which is itself a hybrid between *N. cantabricus monophyllus* and *N. romieuxii*. While I like the seed parent I think these second generation hybrids are even better as the two pictures below show.

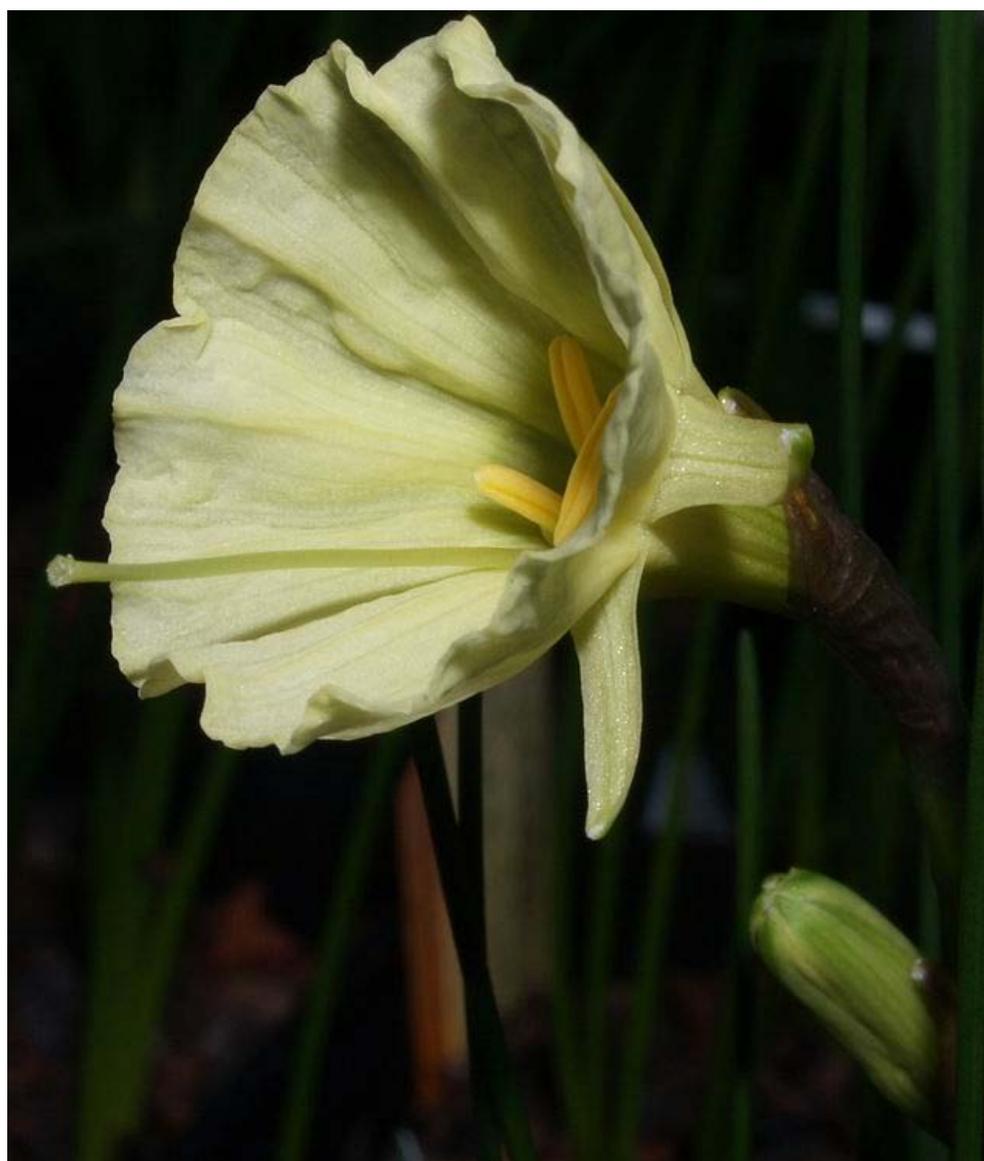


Narcissus 'Camoro' seedlings - above and below





Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus



The picture above is an old cultivar that goes under the name of *Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus* but I have strong suspicions that it is also a hybrid involving *N. cantabricus monophyllus* and *N. romieuxii*. Apart from their obvious beauty the reason for showing this picture is to illustrate that when the flower buds start to unfurl they are a creamy yellow which turns pure white after a day or two.

Narcissus seedling

On the left is another seedling of unknown parentage that I found growing in the sand plunge a few years ago and I now have a good pot of it. Unlike the flowers above it keeps a creamy yellow colour when it matures.



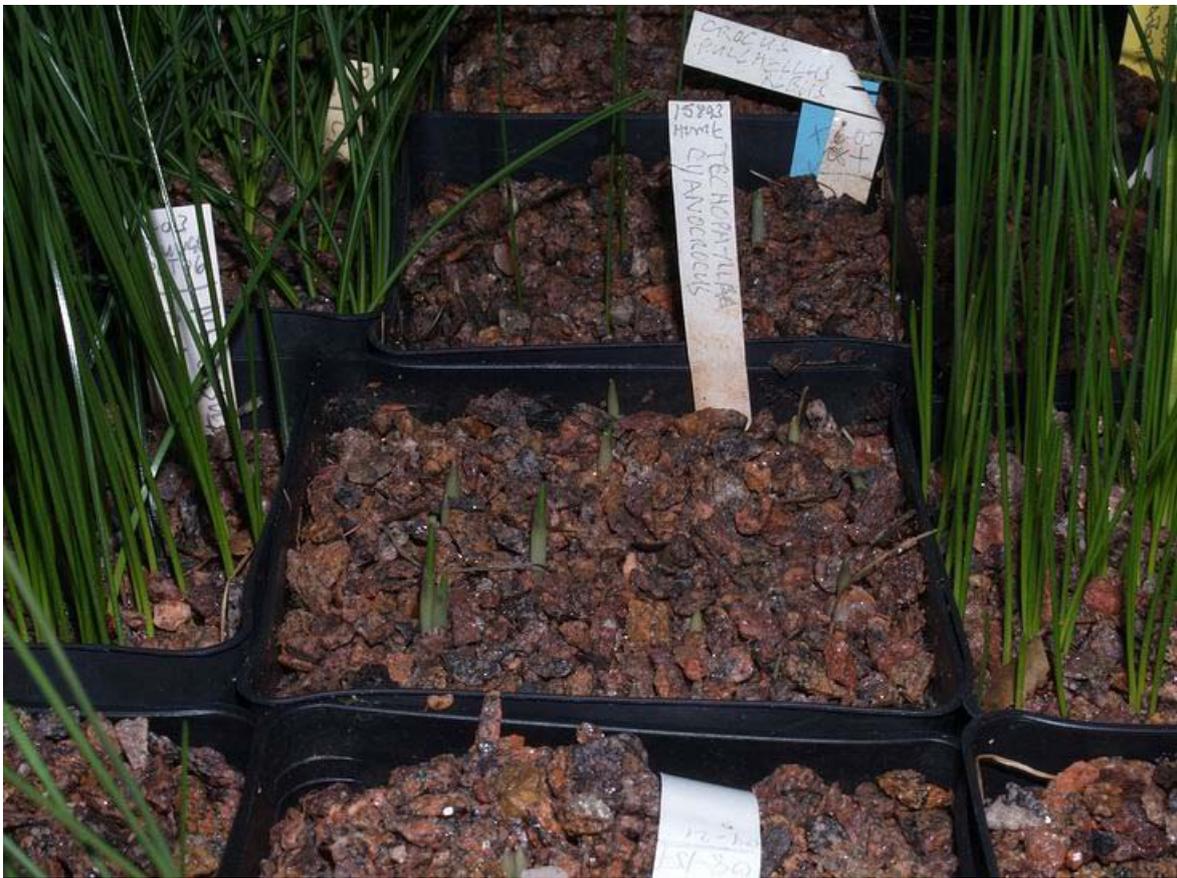
Saxifraga fortunei

This *Saxifraga fortunei* was a pleasant surprise as its flowers rose above the yellowing leaves of other plants.



Salix fruticulosa* syn *hylematica

The tiny leaves of this prostrate Himalayan willow, which we know under the synonym *S.hylematica*, gives good colour in a trough.



Tecophilaea shoots

I am already seeing signs of the spring bulbs such as these Tecophilaea shoots that are a good centimeter through the gravel. They will remain at this stage until February or March when they will then respond to rising temperatures and produce their glorious blue flowers.



Crocus michelsonii

Similarly the shoots of Crocus michelsonii are announcing their presence - these can flower in December or January if we have a mild winter though I would prefer them to wait until the light improves in February.



Dactylorhiza 'Eskimo Nell' tubers

Back in August (see Bulb log 3211) I lifted some clumps of Dactylorhiza, carefully removed the new tubers for planting and then I also potted up the still green stem with last year's tuber still attached.

This old tuber now goes on to produce further new tubers which greatly speeds up your rate of increase.

The scarce white form Dactylorhiza 'Eskimo Nell' is slow to increase if left alone. While most other Dactylorhiza forms we grow will naturally produce at least two new tubers each year, Eskimo Nell mostly produces just one and perhaps a very small offset if the season is a good one. However I have found that removing the new tuber in August and replanting the stem will result in a number of latent buds to burst into growth. Although you can only see four clearly this stem has produced five further tubers after my intervention.



Dactylorhiza 'Eskimo Nell' tuber

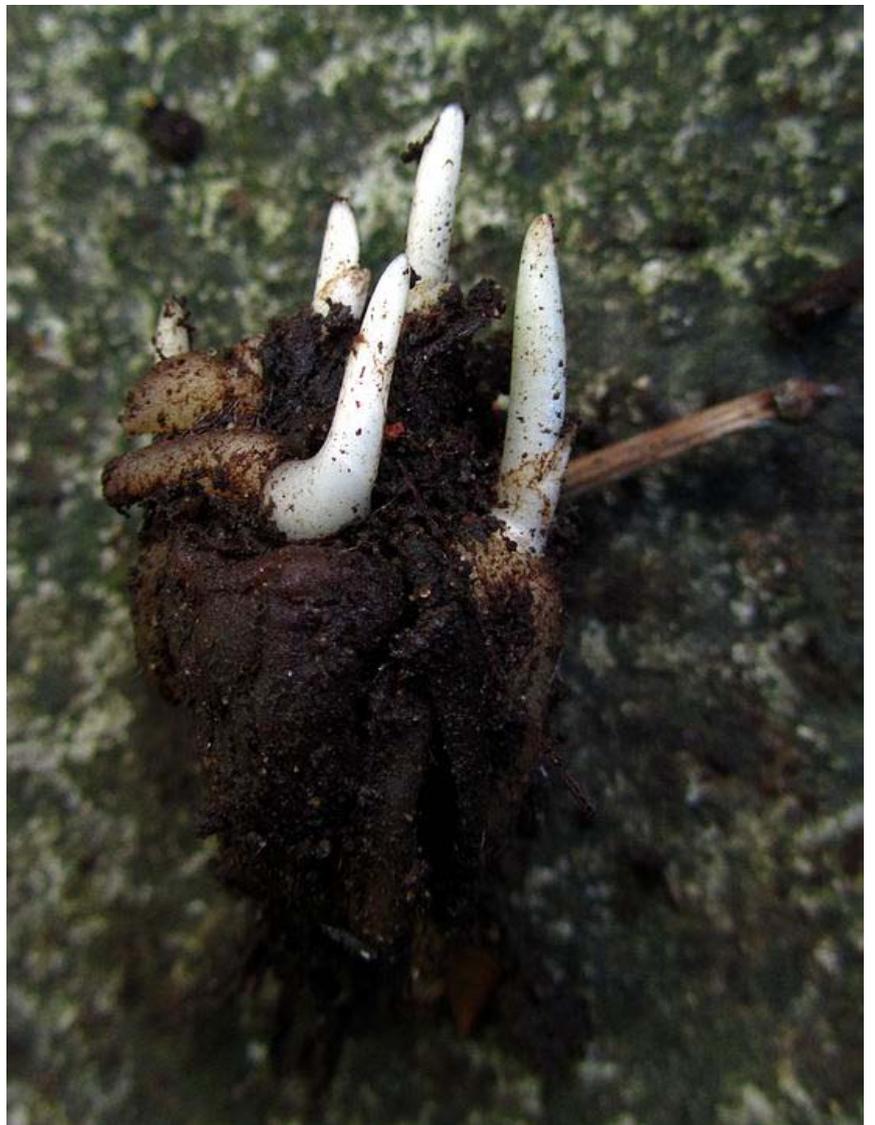
Dactylorhiza 'Eskimo Nell' tuber

In August I stated that even if you accidentally broke the stem off the old tuber you should plant the tuber as it may still produce offsets and here you can see the proof.

This tuber has also formed five offsets without the presence of the stem.

The offsets will take between one and three year's growth to flower depending on their size and the growing conditions.

I grow them on in polystyrene boxes in a potting mix rich in leafmould.



Flemish belfry

I had a wonderful long weekend in Belgium where I saw some fascinating ancient buildings and sampled a few beers with good friends.



Belfries



Church interior

The architecture of the Belfries and churches is magnificent and I was delighted to be able to also see the rich and ornate interiors.

For many centuries the churches were the main patrons of the arts and I saw some striking examples in this church in the centre of Bruges.

I have a particular interest in stained and painted glass so was pleased to see these magnificent windows even though they are 19 century designs and not the original mediaeval ones.

A close up, below, shows a row of Saints.



A row of Saints



Not such a Saintly line up showing some of the forumists who were in attendance at the VRV conference day in Ghent – two from Belgium Luc Gilgemyn and Wim Boens with me in between and a Chanel hopper from England- Arthur Nichols.

The Flemish Rock Garden Club, the VRV, is a young organization but full of both enthusiasm and growers of great skill. They are also a friendly bunch, much like the SRGC! Thanks to all in Belgium for making my stay such a pleasant and memorable one.