



BULB LOG 48.....30th November 2011



Crocus laevigatus

As we near the end of the year a number of you have been thanking me for the bulb log and wondering if I will keep writing it in 2012.

It is a major commitment and some weeks it is not easy to find something to write about but knowing that I have to come up with something is a good discipline for me as it makes me think and look more intensely at what is happening in the garden. Among my worries are that I will become boring as I keep repeating myself year on year - but then gardening is a repetitive, cyclical process and I go through a similar routine each year according to the season. This thought occurred to me as I started year two of the Bulb Log and so I made it a rule that I would not check back to see what I had written in that week in previous years until after I had written the current one. It is just as well I made that rule as, when you do check back - it is incredible how regular things have been over the nine years I have been logging. Despite the perceptions that we sometimes have of a season being later or earlier than 'normal' a quick check through the years of that week's Bulb Logs shows less variation in the flowering times of many plants than we might think. Of course there are exceptions, especially in extreme winters like we have had recently - and what is a normal season any way? The other factor that breaks the repetitive nature of the logs is that the plants we grow we are continually changing as new seedlings reach flowering size, old favourites die out - and so these subtle changes are recorded in the logs. Over recent years I have extended the logs to include more than just the bulbs showing other plants that we grow in the garden, the troughs, raised beds etc. to show that we do not just concentrate on bulbs alone. Having done nine years it seems only sensible to take it to a nice round number and go for a tenth and that is what I intend to do. I thank all of you dear readers for your support and encouragement for without readers of the Bulb Log there would be no point in it continuing.



Crocus laevigatus

Forms of the wonderful *Crocus laevigatus* continue to flower long after most of the early flowering *Crocus* are over – there is just one lonely flower on a pot of *Crocus caspius*. It does seem that we have had more of a mass display of this species than I can remember before and I will be interested to see if we still get the sporadic flowering throughout the winter that we see in most years.



Crocus mathewii 'Dream Dancer'



Crocus mathewii

I showed the flowers of *Crocus mathewii* and the selected dark cultivar of this species *C. 'Dream Dancer'* in earlier Bulb logs and these pictures of the leaves show they are distinct even at this stage of growth. 'Dream Dancer' has almost glaucous leaves that recurve while the type *C. mathewii* has upright green leaves.



Narcissus bulbocodium

As the Crocus flowers diminish for the winter our attention is now drawn to the 'hoop petticoat' daffodils- the *Narcissus bulbocodium* group – which will provide flowers and scent all through the darkest winter months and beyond as the last of this group is still in flower in our garden well into May.

Taxonomically it is a very complex group and even the professional botanists cannot all agree on their classification.

We are in desperate need of a book that brings us up to date with the current thinking on the classification of *Narcissus* complete with details of what botanical characteristics are being used to separate them.

Rafa Diez-Dominguez shows a lot of the Spanish ones on the [Narcissus pages](#) on the forum and explains the variations well but much of the taxonomy seems to be based on geography and this falls down when the plants are grown in cultivation. Any difficulty encountered in distinguishing the species in the wild pales into insignificance when they enter cultivation. Being very promiscuous they will interbreed with each other in our glasshouses producing great swarms of hybrids many of which are themselves fertile and so produce seeds. We have lots of hybrids - for some of them we know the parentage or at least the seed parent but others are self grown seedlings that have flourished in the sand plunges.



Narcissus romieuxii JCA 805

This one I do know as it is a direct descendant of the most famous collection of this species *Narcissus romieuxii* - JCA 805. I want to speak about the colour and photographs now as some may see this picture and say that is not the correct colour - just look at the next three pictures – all are of the exact same plant and flowers.



Narcissus romieuxii JCA 805

So many factors can influence the colour in a picture such as the colour of the light that illuminates the subject – sunlight will give more yellow while cloud will give white to blue casts often bleaching out delicate yellows. The white balance on your camera is there to adjust to these different light values and when left on auto the camera will constantly monitor the light and change the WB setting. I prefer to switch off the auto-WB and monitor how the picture looks on the preview to decide if I have the correct value to give the most accurate colour rendition.



***Narcissus romieuxii* JCA 805**

The correct exposure is also critical for good accurate colour and it is worth checking out your camera metering system by doing a series of pictures of the same subject adjusting the + and – setting by 1/3 values – called bracketing. My camera delivers the most accurate colour, to my eyes, when under exposed by 1/3 of a stop. The other factor that comes into play is the metering zone – most cameras have a default of pattern metering where the camera assesses the light levels across a number of points in the subject. Spot metering where the camera assesses the light only on the central zone will give the best exposure for detailed flower pictures. As we are all viewing these images on different monitors, each of which has its own settings, this brings in another whole range of variations. We may all be looking at a different colour and brightness – the pictures always appear slightly darker on our

CRT monitor than they do on my laptop where I prepare them.



***Narcissus romieuxii* 'Craigton Clanger'**

Narcissus 'Craigton Clanger' is a seedling from *N. romieuxii* that has large bell shaped flowers when viewed from the side as seen in the picture below. Again notice how it appears to have a different colour in that picture – the delicate yellow colours of these *Narcissus* are among the most difficult to capture accurately but I would say the more yellow versions in the picture below gives the most accurate rendition of the colour of the flowers.



***Narcissus romieuxii* 'Craigton Clanger'**



Narcissus 'Camoro'

Narcissus 'Camoro' is a fertile hybrid between *Narcissus cantabricus foliosus* and *Narcissus romieuxii*.



Narcissus 'Camoro' seedlings

This is a pot of Narcissus 'Camoro' seedlings showing some slight variation, the best of which I think surpasses the beautiful parent both in shape and size of the flower. Due to exceptionally dull days this picture was taken using flash while the one above that was taken in natural light.



Narcissus seedling

The pictures below and to the left show the same seedling still growing at the edge of the sand plunge.

The picture below is taken using flash and the one on the left using natural light.



Narcissus seedling

This is yet another Narcissus seedling and the interesting variations to note here are the upwards pointing flower, a lobed edge to the corona and the filaments extend the anthers almost as far forward as the stigma. In most of this group the style is usually much longer.



Even as the flowers start to wither they have an elegant beauty that highlights the folds that run the length of the corona



Two final portraits to show what wonderful photogenic subjects these Narcissus are.

This month our free online magazine [International Rock Gardener](#) features more of these Narcissus.

