



BULB LOG 46.....14th November 2012



Colchicum agrippinum



Autumn continues to provide some flowering interest in the garden with a few Colchicum and Crocus species still sending up flowers. Each Colchicum agrippinum bulb sends up multiple flowers extending their flowering season to between 4 to 6 weeks. A group of Crocus banaticus also continues to flower in the rock bed – as a seedling group they flower at slightly different times

Crocus banaticus



Crocus banaticus seedlings

The variation in colour can be seen clearly in these two *Crocus banaticus* seedlings - one significantly darker than the other.



Bulb house



Crocus kotschyanus

As the flowers in one pot of *Crocus kotschyanus* start to wither and fade, another pot, see below, is just waiting for some warmth and sunlight to open.



Crocus kotschyanus



White Crocus pulchellus hybrid



With the flowering season running some three weeks behind recent years the Crocus flowers are rarely getting enough warmth to open fully never mind getting pollinated. I have not seen a single insect near the Crocuses, even in the bulb house, for weeks - most years the glasshouses are full of hover flies as the autumn flowering crocus are in flower. With the sun so low in the sky even when it shines the temperature hardly rises enough even with the glasshouse doors closed to open the flowers and so they just slowly wither – taking on an attractive crumpled silk texture as they do so.

Another of the many seedling forms of *Crocus laevigatus* is flowering now and this species will continue to flower all through to the early spring. Some Crocus such as these seem to open their flowers at much lower light levels and temperatures than others we grow.

Crocus laevigatus



Crocus caspius

Another species just coming into bloom is *Crocus caspius* and again as ours are all seed raised they will flower at slightly differing times giving a sporadic flowering.

These corms will send up a second flower once the first one has gone over.



Crocus mathewii 'Dream Dancer'

This picture of *Crocus* 'Dream Dancer' shows the dark tube and the pale violet floral segments, rather than white of the type, which makes it stand out as a selected clone. It also shows the second flower just emerging from the centre of the leaves as the first flowers start to go over. The low light levels also cause the floral tubes to extend far more than they would in good light, making the flower flop about more than I would like. There is an interesting thread on the [forum](#) regarding the cultivar name of this plant and just what that name should represent.



I do not know the full history of 'Dream Dancer' or who named it but presumably it was selected and named for the lovely dark petals and tube. A clonal name should only apply to vegetatively propagated and so identical plants.

However the general rules, as I remember, would allow selected seedlings from the named clone that are near identical (within 10%?) to the original parent to also carry the cultivar name. Sometimes after considerable selection and breeding a stable line of dark flowered forms could appear then they could be given a common name but again the proviso is always there that any rogues that stray from the selected colour range is removed.

I can think of *Lewisia* and *Corydalis* where there are seed lines where the majority of seedlings will conform to a fixed colour range.

I was used to calling these seed 'strains' but 'The International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants' does not allow that term to be used any more.

The *Crocus mathewii* seedling on the left and below shows a paler tube and paler petals but still with a dark centre. This is a seedling raised from my original plant of *Crocus mathewii* given to me many years ago by the great man whose name it bears.



Comparing this seedling with the original plant below shows that the original has a much darker contrasting throat.



Crocus mathewii

The contrast between the light and dark in the centre of the flower and the darker tube make this my favourite of all the forms I have seen. I suspect this is the form that is referred to as Crocus mathewii 'Brian Mathew'. Janis Ruksans states in the forum that he finds this a slow increaser and I can agree with that. The variation in this plant and one of its seedlings I showed above illustrates clearly why you cannot use a cultivar name when raising plants from seed and any seed raised forms should revert to Crocus mathewii.



I cannot resist one more picture of the white Crocus pulchellus hybrid.



Crocus longiflorus shoots just emerging – these are more than four weeks behind last year, as are the Narcissus below.



Narcissus flower buds

I was photographing Narcissus in flower on 20th October last year – it seems the season gets later as it progresses. This can be explained by the low light, shorter days and lower temperatures meaning the plants grow much slower than they would if they emerged a month earlier. I remember a time when autumn was colder and winter came early and then our Narcissus did not flower before the turn of the year.



I am so pleased with the flowering of our **Sternbergia lutea** and *S. sicula* and spend ages just looking at them. For some reason I had not checked to see if they had a scent, something I usually always do with plants, and to my delight *Sternbergia lutea* has a spicy scent reminiscent of cinnamon or mixed spice but I could not detect a scent on the *Sternbergia sicula* that is currently in flower.



Some **Cyclamen hederifolium** are still flowering while others bear a wonderful display of leaves, see below - these will be with us right through until next July providing welcome decoration to the winter garden.





Autumn colour can also be observed in the smaller plants like these Androsace in a trough.



Looking at another trough I am reminded of the all year round decoration that we get from some of the silver leaved plants like the silver saxifrage. While other plants lose their appeal as they shut down for the winter silver leaved plants continue to delight all year round.



Celmisia lyallii



Celmisia semicordata

Celmisia also fall into this category of displaying beautiful structural foliage all year round.....