



BULB LOG 42..... 17th October 2012



The seasons have always fascinated me and nowhere are effects more obvious than in the garden.

Some plants that merge into the background structure for much of the year suddenly take on a more obvious role. It may be that they simply stand out more as the herbaceous plants die down or it could be the changing colour contrasts that attract our eye.

On the left the older leaves of *Pinus strobus* turn yellow before they fall off, contrasting so well with the grey green newer needles.



Due to the cool moist summer months many more of our Rhododendrons are producing occasional out of season flowers than we would normally expect at this time..





A hover fly enjoys the shelter of a Rhododendron flower.



An out of season Celmisia flower.



Elsewhere in the garden it is the glorious autumn colour of the various Acers that are the eye grabbing feature. The leaves retain their fabulous colour for some time after they drop providing highlights and contrast to the recently emerged Cyclamen coum leaves in the picture below.





Above, the deep red acer provides a stunning background highlighting the flowers of **Allium thunbergii album** while below, seed heads of Allium wallichii, backlit by the low autumn sun light, provide decoration.





The leaves of *Dactylorhiza* also take on a new role as they turn bright yellow before they go brown and collapse.



A *Cyananthus microphyllus* flower contrasts with the sparkling silver foliage of *Gnaphalium mackayi*



Cyananthus microphyllus



I am not sure if it is just the fact that the flowering season is that bit later than recent years or if this is a poor year for our autumn flowering Crocus in the bulb houses. There are a number of shoots starting to appear but for now it is Crocus kotschyanus and Crocus pulchellus that are the feature.



While these species could be easily confused you can soon separate them by careful studying the flowers.
Crocus kotschyanus above and ***Crocus pulchellus*** below.





The colour of the style filaments can vary as seen in this darker orange variation of **Crocus pulchellus** and below I cannot resist showing another of my white **Crocus nudiflorus** seedlings.





It is interesting seeing how the shafts of low sunlight feature different plants as they break through the trees and shrub. Above, the yellowing leaves of a Primula take on an almost flower like effect as they glow against the darker background – it is as if they are imitating the **Sternbergia sicula** flower below.





Sternbergia sicula 'John Marrs form'

I am delighted to see some of my Sternbergia flowering despite the total lack of any serious heat in the summer. There is much speculation and confusion surrounding the naming of these especially the line between Sternbergia lutea angustifolia and S. sicula.

This is the John Marr form of S. sicula which is a very fine plant with flowers on top of a short stem and leaves that do not hug the ground as in some other forms of this plant.

Sternbergia greuteriana, below, is another name we can add to the confusing mix of forms.

I have a few forms of this species but the most distinct is the one pictured below which morphologically speaking is very distinct.

The flower stems always seem to run to the edge of the pot before rising upwards and the flowers turn over as the pollen ripens as illustrated in the close up on the next page.





Sternbergia greuteriana



I will leave you this week with some colours of the autumn.....