



BULB LOG 15..... 10th April 2013



The beautiful yellow flowers of **Iris winogradowii** are at last opening and are a welcome addition and contrast to the other early spring flowering bulbs in the garden. While we are getting periods of sunshine the air temperature still struggles to get above 5C during the days and with frosts most nights - the soil temperature is no better.



Iris winogradowii in sand bed



This small group is growing very happily in the **sand bed** – we also have another group in the humus beds – on the right a flower of *Galanthus* ‘Elizabeth Harrison’, with its yellow ovary, is just going over having been in flower for four weeks.



I showed this same yellow pigmented ***Galanthus sandersonii* group** in Bulb Log 9 and I first photographed it opening its flowers on the 17th of February showing just what a long time some of these flowers can last.



Galanthus 'Primrose Warburg'

Flowers are there to attract pollinators and once a flower has been fertilised it will generally start to fade quite quickly as the plant switches to support the growth of the seed. I have observed that flowers of sterile bulbs that are genetically unable to set seed last so much longer than their fertile counterparts this is because they have not succeeded in their prime role – they do however give the gardener long lasting blooms.

It may be that the plant in the sand bed is fertile and it is the lack of pollinating insects or it is just waiting to receive pollen from a compatible mate. As Galanthus 'Primrose Warburg' is just opening its flowers now I will use cross pollinate these two forms and see if I get seed on either of the plants.

Galanthus 'Madeleine'

Galanthus 'Madeleine' another snowdrop we have acquired with a yellowish ovary.

It does not have such a dramatic colour contrast between the yellow and green that is displayed in the two shown above but the yellow is more noticeable in life than it appears in this picture.





Fritillaria pudica

The beautiful North American species, *Fritillaria pudica*, is just opening its yellow flowers.

During a sunny day last week I got the opportunity to give all the bulbs under glass a much needed soaking. I had been delaying watering while the temperatures were so low to minimise the chance of frost damage to the bulbs. Wet compost conducts the cold to the bulbs more efficiently. Also the more water there is within a plant's system the more vulnerable they are to damage by freezing as the ice crystals expand and contract rupturing the plant cells. However I reached the point where not watering could be more detrimental to growth than watering.

The growth in the bulbs has been accelerated by this watering and many are now rapidly coming into flower.

Fritillaria carica





I love the many forms of **Fritillaria carica** that we grow and this compact yellow form is among my favourites. It is always worth observing your plants in detail when you will notice the hair like tufts at the tip of each petal that all fritillaria have. My best guess to the purpose of this structure is that sweet nectar runs down the petals from the nectaries onto these hairs which act as a wick helping the flower to attract pollinators.



Fritillaria chitralensis

You may be beginning to think there is a yellow theme to this week's log as I now show *Fritillaria chitralensis*.



Fritillaria armena

This is a good compact form of *Fritillaria armena* that is easily increased clonally as it produces lots of rice grains on the bulbs. I still prefer to try and get it to set seed.



No yellow in the last picture but it does start to appear again on the tips and the interior of this **Fritillaria pinardii**.



Fritillaria sewerzowii

You may gather, because I also featured this species a few weeks ago, that I have a particular fascination with *Fritillaria sewerzowii*. This is a pot of seedlings whose flowers are larger than the more commonly cultivated forms. I first acquired a bulb from Janis Ruksans which had these larger flowers - unfortunately it was one of the many bulbs we lost in one of our severe winter freezes but not before it had set some seed. The two pictures on this page are some of the seedlings which have inherited the large flowers.



Fritillaria sewerzowii



Here another form of **Fritillaria sewerzowii** with smaller outward facing lemon yellow flowers



I had not grown **Gymnospermium altaicum** until a friend gave us some seeds a few years ago – now the first seedlings are in flower. Look carefully and you will see a number of aborted flowers – these white malformed flowers often appear on young seedlings that are not quite mature enough to support fully developed flowers. They have been growing in the seed pot in an open frame so they are perfectly hardy with us. When they go dormant I will plant them out into the garden where they should mature and flower normally.



***Narcissus cyclamineus* hybrid, *Narcissus rupicola* and *Corydalis* in the bulb house.**



***Narcissus* 'Mitimoto' is a bicoloured selection – the slim petals are almost white contrasting with the yellow tube.**



Narcissus 'Ferdie' is a tiny hybrid the flowers are 2cm across from tip to tip.



Corydalis maracandica – ok, there is a bit of a yellow theme this week.



Taking a break from yellow here is *Corydalis wendelboi* growing in a pot in the bulb house along with a *Narcissus watieri* flower that has self seeded into the sand plunge.



Narcissus cantabricus



Narcissus x susannae

and



In the garden many of the *Galanthus* are just coming into flower opening in the brief spells of sunshine.



Mixed plantings of bulbs are typical in our garden with *Galanthus* and *Corydalis* grabbing your eye but look down at the diminutive but lovely *Scoliopus halli* in the foreground.



Another mixed planting of early spring bulbs includes *Eranthis* 'Guinea Gold' allowing me to sign off this week on yellow the featured colour. 'Guinea Gold' is perfectly hardy in our garden and as it blooms that bit later than *Eranthis hyemalis*, whose flowers have now all gone past, it helps extend the flowering season.



***Eranthis* 'GuineaGold'**