



BULB LOG 2.....9th January 2013



Last week I showed you this Hamamelis with the first buds just opening to demonstrate how 'late' the season was compared to last year. Well now I have a correction, a few unseasonably warm days, including one at 13C, making Aberdeen the warmest in the UK also beating most of Europe, has resulted in all the buds now bursting open revealing the orange haze.



Hamamelis

This does show just how quickly some plants can react to sudden changes in temperature – while I thought it would be some weeks before the flowers revealed their beauty in reality it only took a few days of mild conditions.



The run of three nice days in a row gave me the opportunity to tidy up some of the beds, like this one I showed a few weeks ago with all the flattened soggy stems and leaves.

It has been a strange few days with relatively high temperatures for this time of year but the ground never dried out. Even the paving slabs and rocks that would normally dry out quickly, remained not just damp but soaking wet indicating just how much humidity was in the air. These conditions are not good for the plants and I am glad that as I write today the frosts have returned and the sky is blue.

That bed now looks like this with its good layer of garden compost spread over as a thick mulch. It may seem strange to some that I would go to all the work to remove all the leaves and plant debris from the beds just to replace it with the material I removed last year. The mulch material having spent a year in the compost heaps has now broken down into a very nice humus-rich material that will provide nutrients to the plants, retain moisture in the ground as the humus holds onto water and the thick layer also cuts down on evaporation.



Before I spread the mulch I made sure that I removed all the weeds. Some people only associate weeding with the growing season but many weeds are successful because they will grow any time of year - I found many poppers and grass weeds ready to seed lurking around the shrubs. It is my belief that winter is the time to get many of these ephemeral weeds under control preventing them from seeding now. Another benefit of the mulch layer is it helps reduce these weeds from germinating.



Another day I worked to tidy and clear this area.



As I did I uncovered many shoots of the spring bulbs such as Galanthus and this Corydalis. Unlike Galanthus and many other bulbs, the Corydalis buds are much more exposed and vulnerable – even at this early stage you can see each individual flower its early stages of development.



While I was running out of time to spread the complete mulch that day I did ensure that I covered all the Corydalis shoots with some leaf mould to protect them from the frosts that I knew were forecast.



Last year I scattered a lot of our *Eranthis* seeds into other parts of the garden and while I was clearing up I have found a lot of them germinating.



This *Acer palmatum atropurpureum dissectum* is one of the oldest plants in our garden dating back to around 1973. It is a decorative cultivar and the graft layer is clearly visible just above the ground but you will also notice there is some loss to the bark and areas of die back in the stems.



I find that most of our *Acers* suffer some die back mostly on the young growths – these we simply snap off during the winter months.



At last the heat in the bulb house encouraged the flowers to open – this *Galanthus* fully reflexed for the first time.



All the *Crocus laevigatus* flowers in the bulb house that remain fresh also opened for the first time this season and the sight and scent was a great pleasure. I was curious to know what the critical temperature was and does light level play a direct part in opening the flowers.



I already know that the flowers will open and close even when they are picked from the plant so I plucked six for an experiment. The three above were laid on the top of a tin inside our kitchen and I placed the other three in the dark inside the tin. As soon as those on top of the tin opened, it took about five minutes, I checked inside the tin.



The *Crocus laevigatus* inside the tin were also open – so I can conclude that in this case light is not directly involved and it is purely down to the temperature - the critical temperature was around 8C.



Crocus sieheanus

Raised from seed, this is the first time I have flowered *Crocus sieheanus*.

It is a relatively newly described species and still quite scarce in cultivation.

I always try to confirm the identity of new plants and I am fairly certain that this is the correct species.

The final confirmation will come when I examine the corm tunic and as I have no intention of disturbing the plant in growth that will have to wait until it goes dormant and I replot it.

Narcissus buds

As regular readers will know our Narcissus are much later to come into flower this season but at last a few are making the effort – especially after the recent mild period of weather.

One thing I am noticing is that many are struggling to break out of the spathe that surrounds and protects the flower bud.

The flower on the left has become distorted as instead of becoming brown and papery the spathe remained quite green and tough and one half of the flower struggled to emerge causing the misshapen form you can see.

Below are two more pictures - the one on the left shows a similar problem but I helped out by carefully splitting the spathe to allow the flower to develop freely. The spathes of those on the right are behaving normally turning papery and fragile to allow the flower to break out freely.





In the Fritillaria house *Fritillaria tortifolia* is the first of this genus to send a shoot up.



And in a trough there is more promise of flowers to come as the buds on a *Saxifraga* become more prominent.....