

BULB LOG 13..... 27<sup>th</sup> March 2013

For many years I re-potted all our bulbs every year but now, partly due to the number of pots we have, many do not get re-potted until I see signs that the bulbs are going backwards and need to be replanted. Good evidence that some of these pots have not been touched for a number of years can be seen (left) where all of the *Narcissus cyclamineus* have self seeded

into other pots of Crocus, Fritillaria etc. This shows how easy it is for pots to become contaminated by interlopers if you do not exercise the strict discipline of collecting all seed before it sheds and re-potting into fresh compost every year.

At one time this contamination would have bothered me but now I rather enjoy bulbs growing from seed without any input from me.

Given that I regularly tease galanthophiles I am not sure I should be owning up to growing Galanthus in the other side of that same frame.

My excuse is that Maggi got them and they are waiting to be planted out into the garden when they are dormant.





### Sand Bed

I actively encourage self seeding in the open garden and the sand beds. When I built this sand bed in 2006 I scattered seeds in the sand now many of the plants are well established and now seeding themselves around in the sand. The Corydalis, Cyclamen and Crocus seen above have grown from these seeds and I just love this sort of mixture of bulbous plants growing happily together and requiring little attention.



**Corydalis  
nudicaulis**

Many years ago I tried to grow Corydalis nudicaulis unprotected in the open garden but it did not survive - now I will try it again when I re-pot them, by planting some tubers out into the sand beds this summer. It is my intention to try growing the majority if not all of our bulbs unprotected in the sand beds over the coming years as I get spares. The evidence I have to date suggests that most bulbs grow better in the sand beds than they do in pots under glass.

## **Corydalis oppositifolia subsp. kurdica**

Originally I got a single tuber of *Corydalis oppositifolia* subsp. *kurdica* from the late Kath Dryden and by carefully self pollinating the flowers with a paint brush I got some seeds to set - all of the plants raised from that seed came true to type.

I cannot say the same for a number of other *Corydalis* species such as *C. paschei*, *C. wendelboi*, *C. pumila*, etc where all the seedlings I have raised appear to have hybridised. To the gardener this may not be a problem in fact it could provide us with plants that will tolerate a wider range of growing conditions and be easy to establish in the garden. However if you are trying to keep a collection of pure species you will need to keep them isolated from each other to avoid cross pollination between the species.



**Corydalis maracandica**



There is a lot of growth appearing in the Fritillaria house – the view above across the 7cm pots shows that as well as Fritillaria growth there are a number of self seeded interlopers in the form of Narcissus. Again this is not a problem to me as it would be very easy to separate Fritillaria and Narcissus bulbs out at re-potting time in fact it can be an advantage to both types of bulb. I find that there is a greater chance of bulbs getting wet rots if there are only a few small ones in a pot - growing other bulbs with them will help use up any surplus moisture to the advantage of all.



**Fritillaria stenantha**



**Fritillaria stenantha** is always among the first to open its flowers each year and it seems to grow well under our conditions, setting seed most years. As a result we have a number of pots of seed raised bulbs. As our pots are seed raised individual clones we are far more likely to get a good seed set than we would with a single vegetatively increased clone. Seed raised plants do not only exhibit variation in looks but they also have variation in the conditions they can tolerate – some may stand more moisture, others survive well in hot dry conditions. This



form of variation is nature's way of ensuring that, whatever the local conditions the seed is distributed into, there is a good chance that some will be well adapted to survive. The seedlings that we raise to maturity are those that can cope with our cool moist conditions while those that require warmer dry conditions will die off at an early stage. In the pot above one plant, see detail on the left, has been frosted at the top of the stem while the others are fine. It could be that this individual has a lower tolerance to frosts than its siblings - or it could have been that it was at a particularly vulnerable stage of growth or perhaps it was the one that was more exposed to the cold wind blowing in through the well ventilated bulb house.

## **Fritillaria stenantha**

I have not tried this species outside yet but I have enough to try planting some out in a sand bed this summer.

The Rhinopetalum group of Fritillaria to which this species belongs generally likes a warm dry summer and I fear that it may not survive our wet summer conditions.

Another pot below shows a paler form almost lacking the pink wash seen in those above.





I group some of the larger species into one corner of the Frit-house and one of my favourite species is *Fritillaria sewerzowii*.



***Fritillaria sewerzowii***



Raising them from seed I selected this compact form which flowers on a relatively short stem making it ideal for growing in a pot – this made a fine exhibit and served us well during the days when we were showing regularly. I have a number of other forms that are taller, some have darker flowers, some have larger flowers. I also grow this species outside but as they come into growth early they are susceptible to being destroyed by frosts – for this reason I will always keep some under the protection of cold glass.



**Fritillaria carica** and **Fritillaria caucasica** are among the many other species in bud.



There are still plenty of Narcissus coming into flower in the bulb house giving us a wonderful display.



A view across the experimental sand bed where Narcissus are in flower now Fritillaria shoots are also appearing – I will add many more bulbs to this bed in the coming year.



The colour here is provided by **Narcissus perez-chiscanoi** and **Narcissus 'Craigton Bell'**.



**Different colour forms of Narcissus bulbocodium**



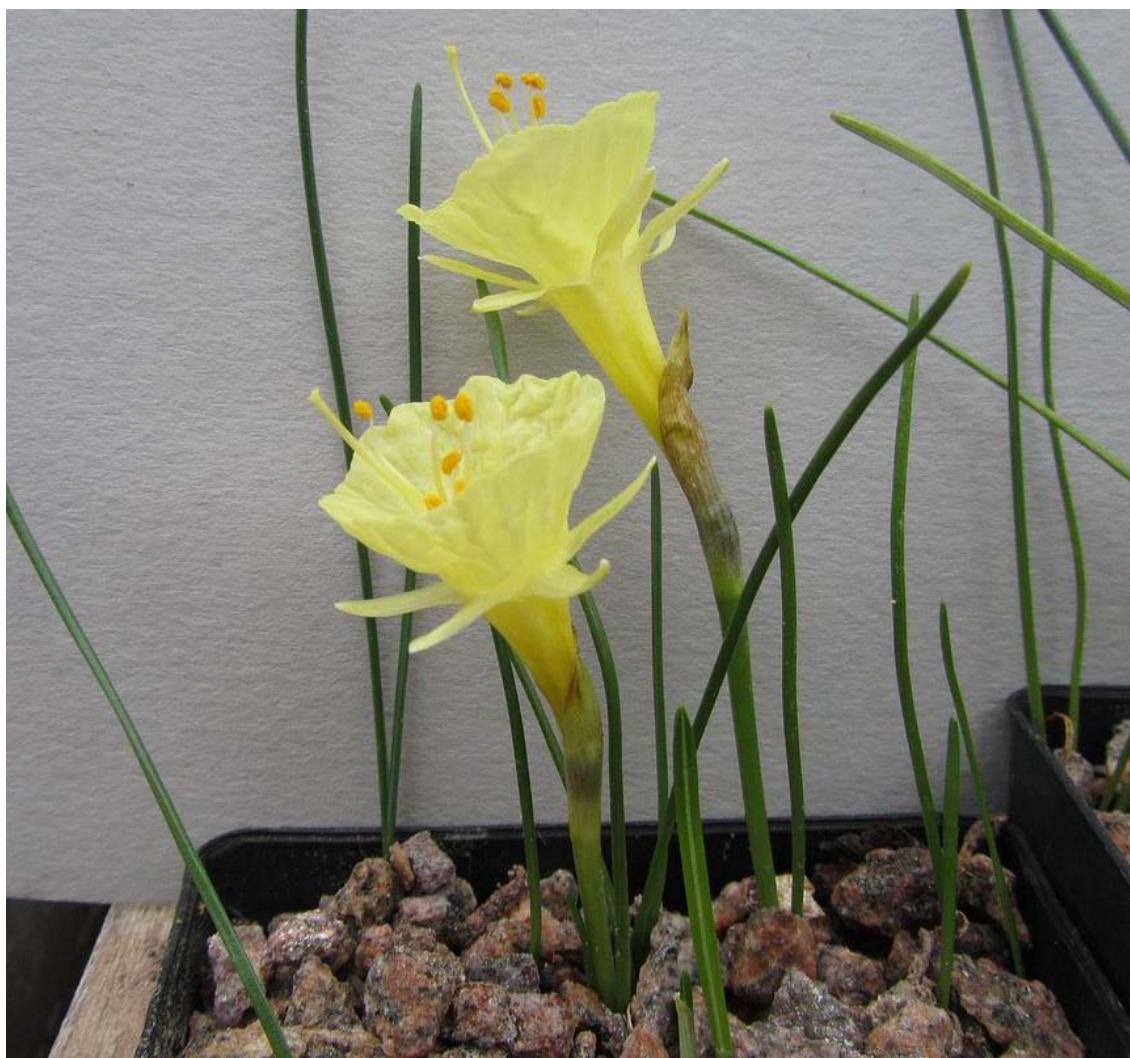
The single colour of a clonal pot of **Narcissus 'Don Stead'**.



I much prefer seeing the range of flower shapes and colours displayed in these adjacent 7cm pots of **Narcissus asturiensis** and **Narcissus bulbocodium**.



Above is another colourful grouping of **Narcissus bulbocodium**, **Narcissus cantabricus** and a hybrid between the two species.



I got this plant a number of years ago as **Narcissus hedraeanthus** but I do not believe it to be that species – it is certainly nothing like the other forms of that species I have grown.



Many Narcissus flowers are now going starting to wither and I just hope that despite the cold that some of them will have been fertilised and will produce seed. Last year I got hardly any seed as the pollen rotted due to the cold damp weather at flowering time. While it has been colder this year it has not been so damp. I have not noticed any mould on the pollen so I remain hopeful of getting some seed.



Illuminated with flash due to the low light is a wonderful display of hardy spring plants with **Crocus herbertii** and **Scoliopus hallii** – showing just how tough some of these plants are.



The flowers of **Scoliopus hallii** are just starting to open – I regularly get seed from this species and while I let some naturalise I do collect some to sow in pots as seen below.



I sow the seeds into 11cm pots and leave them there until they reach flowering size when they can be planted out directly into the garden. By leaving them in a pot for a number of years self seeding contamination happens with a Hepatica seedling happily sharing this pot – I love it.....