



BULB LOG 20..... 15th May 2013



Rock Garden Show in Prague

We spent the last day of an extremely successful and enjoyable 2nd Czech International Conference and Garden Tour at the famous outdoor display of the Prague Rock Garden Club mounted in May each year. Rather than displaying the plants in pots as is the tradition in the UK they display them creatively in a rock garden setting. In my view their way is much more likely to attract newcomers to take up growing these fascinating plants than seeing perfect specimens displayed in pots on benches.



The Friday we spent in Prague was the only day that the rain bothered us and as you can see it poured down all the time we were at the display. The wet did not dampen the enthusiasm for the display or the extensive plant sale that offered an unbelievable array of rarities. I spent some time sheltering under a porch of the church observing the scene and enjoying organ music leaking from the church as an organist rehearsed their programme.





Just to give a small taster the next group of pictures show details taken in the gardens of the four main organisers of the entire event. Above is a colourful scene at the 'Beauty Slope' the garden of Zdenek Zvolanek, joint Editor of the International Rock Gardener.



This vignette from the garden of master seed collector and explorer Vojtech Holubec.



A tiny section of the extensive and expanding series of rock beds in the garden of Jiri and Ludmila Papousek.



Petr Divis only caught the 'Rock Garden Bug' a few years ago but has already created a fantastic series of rock garden beds, using granite that show outstanding skill and artistry in the placing of rocks. I have always said in my trough workshops that you should be bold with the rocks and place them to look good before you add any plants – then you can further enhance the effect with plant highlights – that is well illustrated here.



Androsace villosa

Not in a Czech garden - this *Androsace* is back home in Aberdeen in one of my small troughs that do in miniature what the Czech gardeners are so good at – another one is shown below.





As soon as we arrived back home I was out checking to see how the plants in the garden and bulb houses had fared in our absence. I had been checking the Aberdeen weather while we were away and there had been some sunny days with temperatures approaching 20C. In the small glass houses this temperature is greatly magnified and many of the bulbs have responded to the heat and consequently drying conditions by retreating into the summer rest earlier than they would if I had been home and able to keep them moist and cooler. This effect is no more dramatic than in this very shallow plunge where I have been planting bulbs and seed. Some Narcissus look like they are setting seed and the flower of *Allium yosemitense*, below, looks perfectly happy as its leaves start to turn brown.



Allium yosemitense



Allium derderianum

Another onion collected by Vojtech Holubec is still in full growth in the bulb house – before we left I removed some panes of glass from the side so it remained a bit cooler.



Leucocoryne angustipetala



Nothoscordum ostenei

These two onion relatives are from another great plant collector, the late Jim Archibald. Neither are what you would call spectacular or eye catching but they are both interesting and appeal to me as a bulb enthusiast.



The *Ornithogalum* leaves have gone for this year but the flowers are only coming out now extending the flowering season in the prop-house.



Most of the bulbs in the plunge of 7cm pots had green leaves when I left but now they are nearly all dried out. The few at the far end that are still green are *Narcissus*.



There is no point in trying to water bulbs in an attempt to get them to grow on once the leaves start to turn yellow in fact it is dangerous to do so. Once the bulbs start to go into dormancy they will not change their mind and adding water which will not be used by the plant can cause the bulb to rot. Despite the fact that if I had been home I could have kept the growth going for a while longer, most of these bulbs have had a good growing season and should all still flower next year.



One still in full growth where I removed a glass pane is this pot of seedlings from *Narcissus bulbocodium*.



Galanthus 'Craigton Twin'



Erythronium sibericum

In the garden I am encouraged to think we will have a better seed harvest than last season – it could not be worse as we had virtually no seed set on the bulbs last year. Two that are definitely in seed are the twin flowered Galanthus 'Craigton Twin' – it will be interesting to see how many if any of the seedlings inherit the twin flowers - the other which I am delighted with is Erythronium sibericum whose capsules are also swelling.



Anemone nemerosa



Double white *Anemone nemerosa*



Fritillaria meleagris



This is the last picture I took before we left for the Czech Republic and below is the same scene when we returned.



It is certainly not the time of year that I would choose to be away from our garden as we missed masses of Erythronium flowers that opened and went over while we were away but I would not have wanted to miss such an Event as the Czech Conference.

Many of our fellow travellers announced that they would be radically overhauling their gardens after the Czech experience – I will not. While I saw outstanding gardens I would not swap

any of them for ours but I did learn a lot. I think the biggest lesson that I already knew but was reinforced in my mind was that it was not simply the outstanding skill of the Czech growers or their artistic rock work or planting mediums – all of which I could copy- that allowed them to grow such an array of plants that I could never hope to grow in our garden but **the climate**. The heat from the sun that both ripens and keeps the plant stems and necks dry is the main agent and their primary skill is to recognise this and to grow the plants that suit their environment. I am sure they look on in as much envy when they visit our cool moist Scottish gardens and see plants that they can only dream of growing.



Some of my own rock work on a small scale.....

We were made very welcome by the Czechs and they organised a wonderful conference and tour. You will see many more pictures of the event and gardens now and in coming weeks as they are posted on the [forum](#).