

BULB LOG 48.....27<sup>th</sup> November 2013**Autumn Leaves**

When the weather is suitable our current task is that of lifting leaves. I enjoy this process because it gets me close to the ground and observing what is going on.

Autumn fruits of some plants, such as Arisaema, below, still provide good colour as well as that promise of new plants to come as the seeds germinate in the spring.

**Arisaema fruits, below**



### **Podophyllum hexandrum**

Slugs and or snails have been munching on the fruit of the Podophyllum allowing the precious content of the seeds to spill out.



### **Trillium shoots**

Other plants have shoots already breaking through the ground like this Trillium. Here you can see one main shoot that will flower next year, surrounded by many secondary growths indicating that this will be a good clump forming plant - some trilliums increase like this while others always remain as a singleton. It may be advantageous for a quicker increase to lift and possibly divide this root next year – I will keep you informed



Many **Galanthus** shoots are also visible just waiting their time until the conditions are favourable to growing.



Most of our Hepatica leaves remain all year round and can provide very decorative winter interest especially when so well marked as on the plant I got from Cliff Curtis which he has named, **Hepatica 'Stained Glass'**.



Other leaves that remain attractive all through the winter include all the hardy Cyclamen including **C. hederifolium**



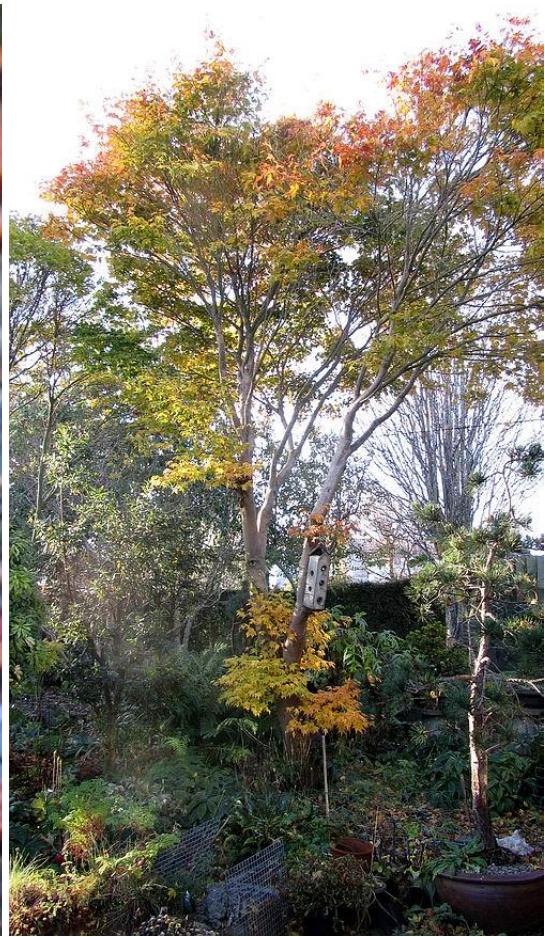
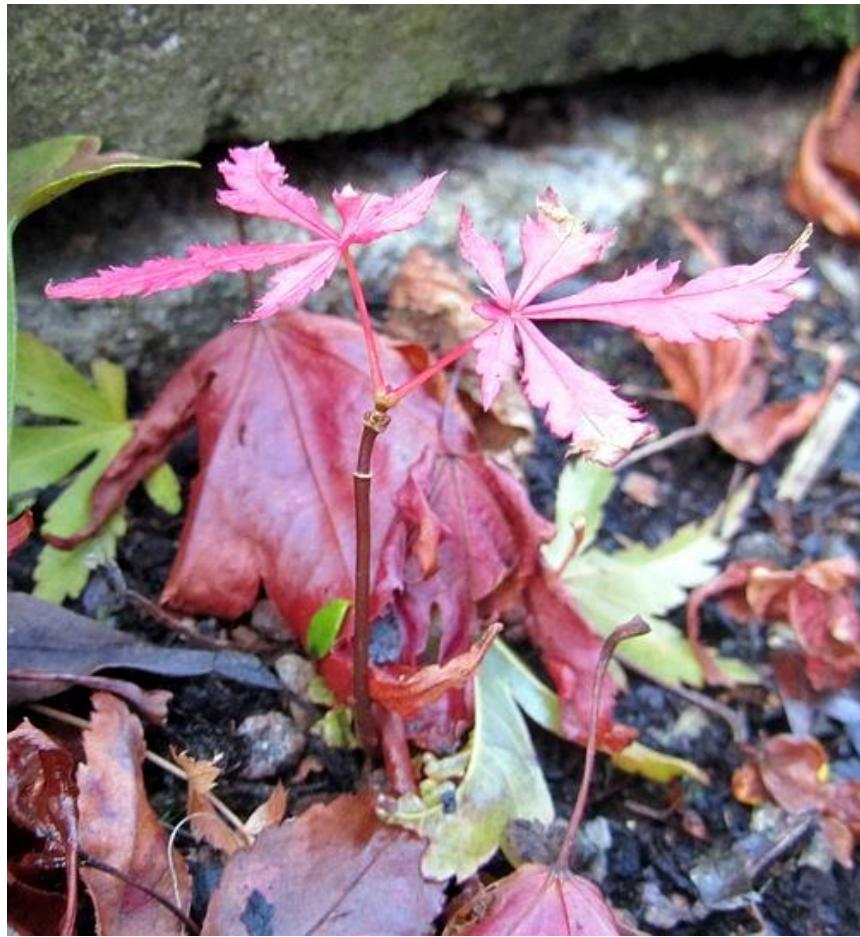
**Petroselinum crispum**, or parsley as it is commonly called, seeds around in our garden – this is most useful as I can always forage around and find some of this herb for cooking. Here it is growing with a clematis hybrid that I made many years ago – a three way cross involving Clematis marmoraria (twice) and C. paniculata.



For the most part Rhododendrons are not often associated with autumn coloured leaves but many will provide a colourful display. Although we call them evergreen the leaves do not last for ever - some leaves like those above last a little over a year turning colour and shedding in the autumn after the new growth leaves have established. Other evergreen species of Rhododendron hold onto their leaves for one, two or three years before they are shed. The colour in this species is further enhanced by the attractive red stems of the new growth. We grew this plant from ACE seed and I think it is *Rhododendron yunnanense* or a closely related species.



Sometimes seedlings just appear in the garden like this Acer seedling with bright red autumn colour that I found as I was clearing away the fallen leaves. I found another, shown below, one nearby.



When I tell people that they should grow trees from seed they often say it will take them too long – but that is not always the case. I believe that after five years if you compare a seed raised tree planted out at an early age to a larger container bought one planted at the same time they will be much the same size but after ten years the seed raised plant will have overtaken the container grown one. The Acer on the right is one I raised from seed and is now some 4-5 meters high and is still holding onto its leaves long after the others have dropped theirs.



While the two new self-sown seedlings, shown above, have dark red autumn colour this one has a bright yellow leaf.

Over the years I have done much pruning to reduce the canopy of this tree and a sister seedling because they tend to have a spreading habit. As we do not have the space to allow them that freedom

many lower branches have been removed. You will notice that I have allowed some new growths to form low down on the trunk, which I keep pinched back, to give me the option to cut the whole tree back to that level at some time in the future should we deem it necessary



Cutting back is one of the ongoing tasks in a mature garden like ours. Here a **Mutisia oligodon** grows against the south facing wall of the house. If we did not cut it back from time to time it would take over, closing off the walk way and covering the windows. This year it is time for a serious trim back of the growth.

There is no point in doing a half-hearted job it needs taken right back nearly to the wall. We have done this many times in the thirty odd years it has grown in this spot.



Removing the bulk of the growth is the first stage of the task and over the next few weeks I will trim back the individual stems now that I can see them properly. Some I will cut low down towards the ground to encourage a good new growth over the complete shrub and not just at the top. Now I have a big pile of trimmings that does not compact very well so how am I to get rid of it?



That is where a good shredder is invaluable in a garden like ours as it compacts this heap into a single bag of shavings which can now be composted and recycled into our garden soil.



**Blechnum penna-marina**



While *Blechnum penna-marina* is a very attractive small fern be warned once it becomes established it can take over.



The problem is it runs by stolons and in time it will form a dense carpet that will smother out most smaller plants - we confine it to growing in a gravel area between some troughs. Even there it becomes too vigorous and needs controlling – the stolons even find the drainage holes in the bottom of the trough and if not removed they can take the trough over.



Fortunately it is fairly shallow rooted and can be easily removed from this situation. By the time I was finished there were no obvious signs of the fern left but experience tells me that there will be enough root or spores left for it to regenerate and in five to ten years' time I will have to repeat this process.



In the bulb house there are still pots of *Crocus laevigatus* in flower - the leaves of *Cyclamen*, *Oxalis* and *Tropaeolum* can also be seen in this picture



***Galanthus reginae olgae*** flowers last a very long time in the cold conditions of the bulb house.



The first of the Narcissus in the bulb house are in flower though not near their peak yet.

**Narcissus cantabricus foliosus on the left and a Narcissus hybrid on the right.**

We used to have masses of *Narcissus cantabricus foliosus* before the last big winter freeze a few years ago. We had not had a severe cold winter for a number of years and I got too casual in ensuring that all plunges were protected with warming cables resulting in big losses in the prolonged freezing conditions.

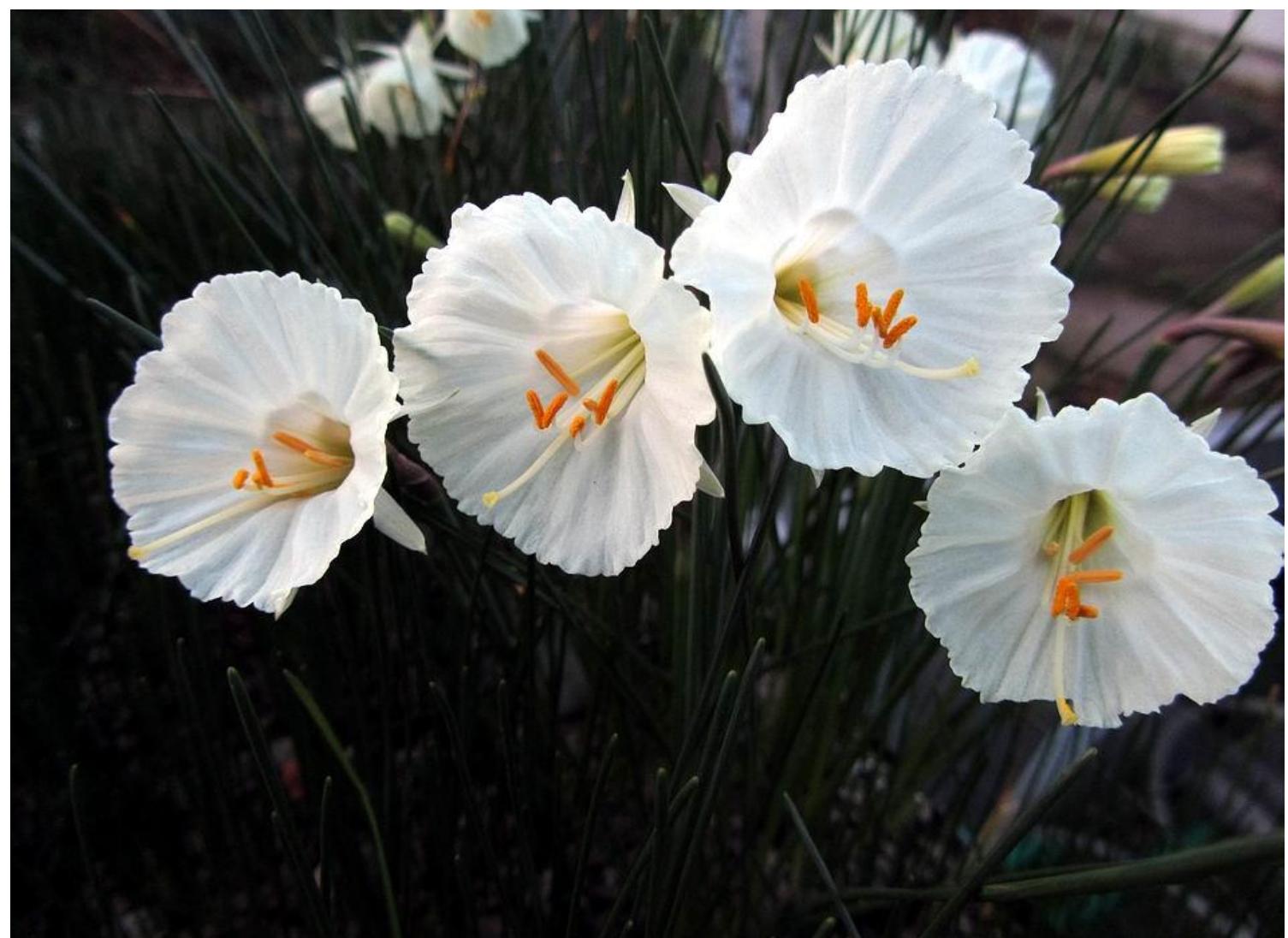


***Narcissus cantabricus foliosus***

Now our numbers are building back up I do not intend to make the same mistake twice.

## Narcissus hybrid

This is a self-sown hybrid that I found growing in the sand plunge a number of years ago. I was going to say I rescued it but for the fact that the plants tended to grow better themselves in the sand than they did in a pot! However I did like this particular form with its large white flowers and wavy edged corona so I did grow it in a pot. Now with the pots fitting so neatly into the new plunge there is not the same opportunity for plants to self-seed into the sand which is one of the reasons why I converted one of the old plunges into a sand bed.



I do not know the exact parents but suspect it involves *Narcissus romieuxii* and *Narcissus cantabricus*.....