



BULB LOG 17.....23rd April 2014



This picture of spring plantings with one of our three glass houses, the Fritillaria house in the background, shows the two main aspects of our garden – open beds and glass house - which leads us to consider if we had to choose only one, which would it be? I think without any doubt I would choose the garden over the glass house as it brings me so much pleasure. What the glass houses allow us to do is to grow plants that we think will not grow outside: I say ‘think’ because as I try more bulbs outside I discover they grow as well if not better than they do under glass, but more importantly it allows us to extend our flowering season right through the winter when we can enjoy them under the glass house protection. I hope I never have to make that choice.



Narcissus bulbocodium

A nice pot of *Narcissus bulbocodium* flowers fight their way through the mass of foliage – different forms of this species flower all through the winter right up until May in our garden.



Narcissus x cazorlanus



N.obeseus x N. triandrus with N.bulbocodium

Narcissus x cazorlanus is the name we originally knew this cross as - it is a naturally occurring hybrid between *Narcissus bulbocodium* and *N. triandrus*. On the right a paler hybrid of similar parentage, *Narcissus obeseus x Narcissus triandrus*, made by Anne Wright, beside another form of *Narcissus bulbocodium*.

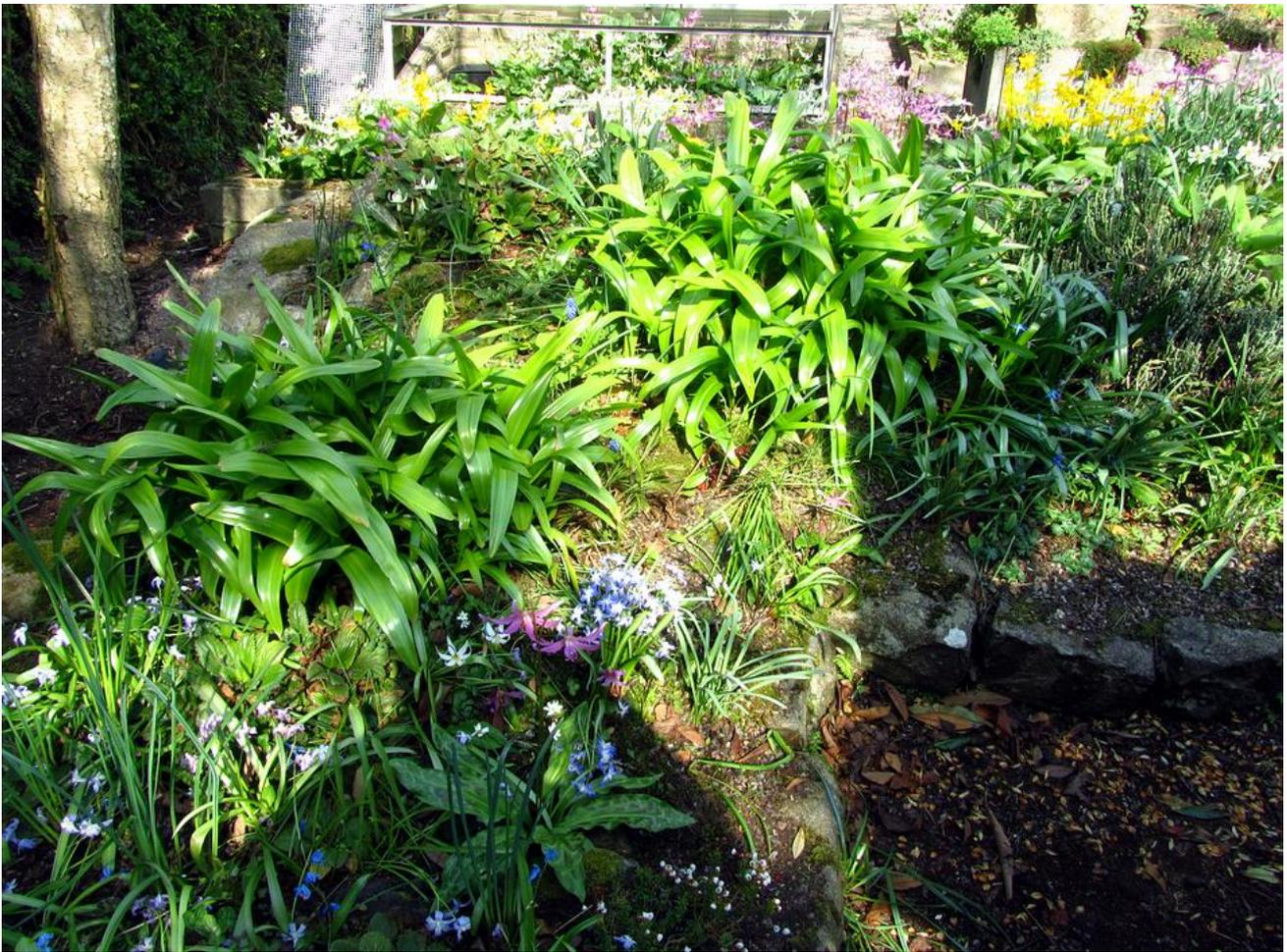


Muscari 'Maxabel'

Last autumn I was given some bulbs of Muscari 'Maxabel' – spotted in the garden of Joy Bishop by Wim de Goede and named after Joy's grandchildren. I have no idea of the species or parentage of this plant but I do like it for its short dense flowers stems over broad grey-green leaves. It is being grown commercially now. I have it growing both under glass as shown above plus I planted a few outside which are at a very similar stage of growth. It has not been the best winter to test its hardiness here as it has been unusually mild for us but I am hopeful that provided with good drainage it will survive long term outside. I always used to keep some bulbs under glass considering them an insurance against possible losses of bulbs growing outside but in many instances it is the reverse with the bulbs outside growing better than the ones that are under glass.



Muscari grow along with other spring bulbs in what we call the 'rock garden' – reflecting a previous incarnation.



Beds go through continual change as plants outgrow their space or in the case of what was originally an 'L' shaped rock garden it was the trees and shrubs around it that grew, casting shade, making it unsuitable for many apline plants. Faced with this situation we adopted it for smaller bulbs, that grew before the leaf canopy developed, and shade loving rock garden plants. Even here we have to continually step in and manage growth. The large clumps of *Colchicum agrippinum* leaves have become out of scale with the other planting - this is especially exaggerated after the mild winter encouraged the *Colchicum* leaves to grow much earlier than in most years. I want to keep some *Colchicum* in this bed to provide those late summer flowers and picked *C. agrippinum* for its relatively small narrow leaves so I will split these clumps putting a few bulbs back as well as trying to find other species that might better fit in this bed.



Driveway

All regular readers will know of our driveway planting where over many years I have simply scattered seeds into the hard packed gravel strip between the paving. As the plants flower I encourage them to self-seed, often helping distribute the seeds along the length of this narrow strip.



Driveway planting



Primula vulgaris and Trillium albidum



Trillium grandiflorum and Erythronium revolutum to the left –‘Craigton Cover Girl’ right



Trillium hybrids - part of the *T. erectum* x *T. flexipes* complex.



Erythronium* 'White Beauty' and *Tulipa tarda



***Erythronium americanum* and *Erythronium* 'White Beauty'**



The proliferating form of **Erythronium americanum** that is commonly grown has a reputation for producing masses of leaves with few if any flowers. A number of years ago our groups started to flower – there are still many more immature, single leaved, bulbs than flowering ones but the effect is now very decorative and pleasing - perhaps they just took time to settle.



Erythronium americanum

Erythronium montanum

I was starting to worry about the absence of any visible growth from our *Erythronium montanum* – neither the plunge baskets nor the garden plants had come above the ground. How relieved I was to find these plants while I was hand weeding in the ‘rock garden’ bed. I really enjoy weeding by hand - it not only removes the plants we do not want but gets me down and close, observing all the growth forms.



Erythronium montanum

I should not have been worried as I know that this is the *Erythronium* that has evolved in a cold area so has the shortest time above ground - appearing later, flowering quickly then setting seed before the other species.



Erythronium hendersonii



Erythronium tuolumnense

Erythronium tuolumnense is often described as not so desirable and this is almost certainly down to a combination of factors - one is that much of these comments are from growers in warmer southern gardens and second the most commonly seen form is not the best selection from this species. When you get good clones it is a magnificent species well worth a place in any cool garden. It is a species that has been used for many years to produce a number of hybrids, such as 'Pagoda' but by far the best of which are some of the newer ones.



The yellow flowers of **Erythronium 'Joanna'** have hint of a pink to their reverse revealing the influence of *Erythronium revolutum* the other parent of this *E. tuolumnense* hybrid.



Apparently *E. tuolumnense* is also one of the parents of the late John Walkers hybrid, **Erythronium 'Mini Ha Ha'** – the other parent presumably being *Erythronium oregonum*. This is a great plant that increases well providing a spectacular display which along with his other hybrids that I know of, *E. 'Susanna'* and *E. 'Eirine'*, named after his granddaughters, is a wonderful plant legacy and I hope that they will become more widely distributed.



A group of species and hybrids being grown in polystyrene boxes include 'Craigton Cover Girl' 'Susannah', 'Minnehaha' 'White Beauty' and 'Craigton Beauty'.



Not a hybrid but an aberrant form of ***Erythronium revolutum*** where two flowers have become fused into one – this kind of mutation is caused by damage in the early stage of growth and is not likely to appear every year.



***Erythronium revolutum* hybrids**

A few weeks ago I showed the beautiful foliage markings of these plants and said I would update you when the flowers opened.



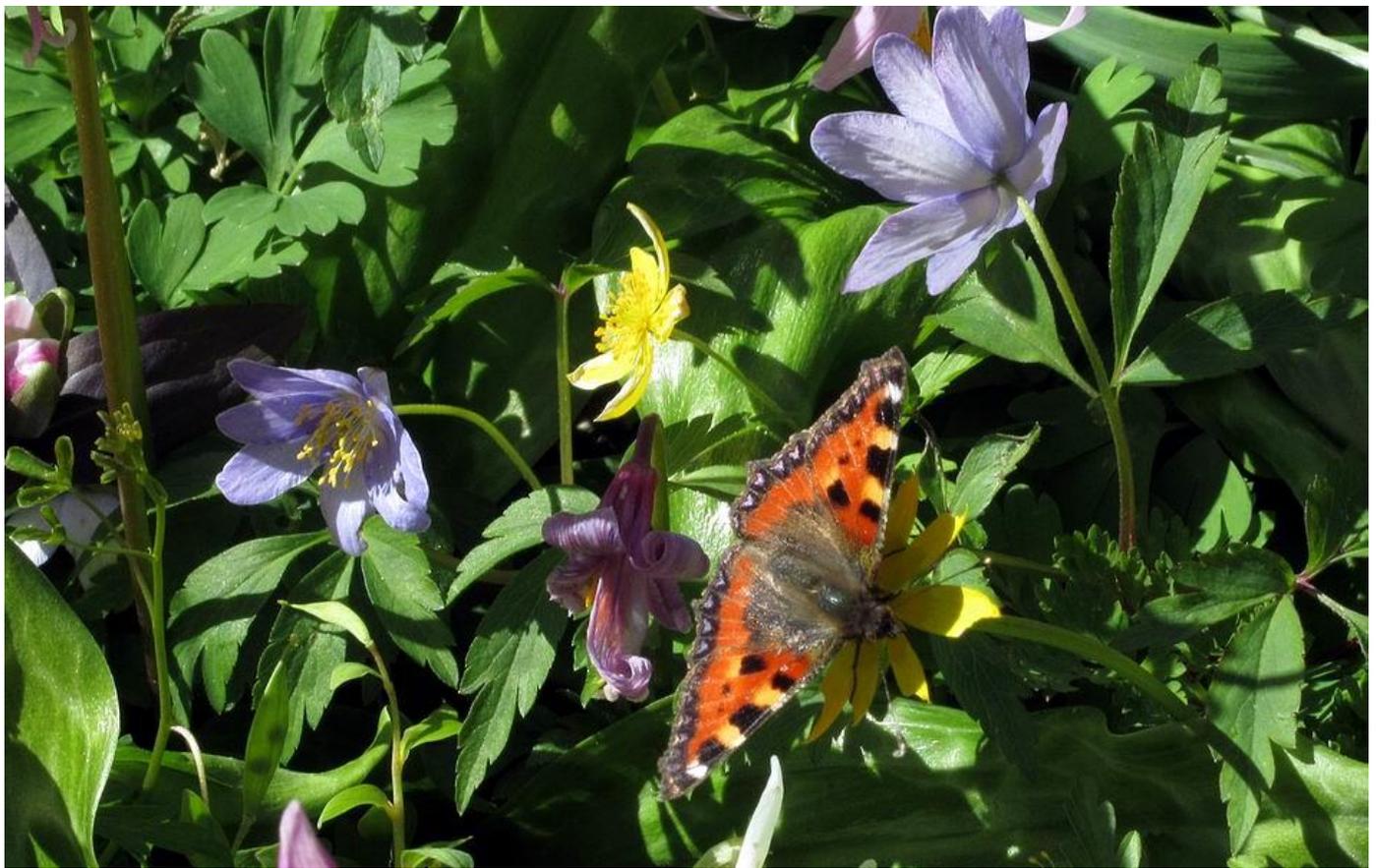
Similar hybrids are appearing all around the garden and I am watching them all to see which performs best.



Another darker coloured *Erythronium revolutum* hybrid.



The evidence that this wasp is a pollinator is all over its back – this pollen is not from the *Erythronium*s but the *Fritillaria*s that seem to have an irresistible attraction to wasps.



Butterflies were a rare sight in our garden in recent years, I hope this early visitor signals that this will be a better year.



Last image for this week is a view across the Erythronium plunge now in peak flower, to the right the 'rock garden', over the bulb bed and towards the distant Fritillaria house.....