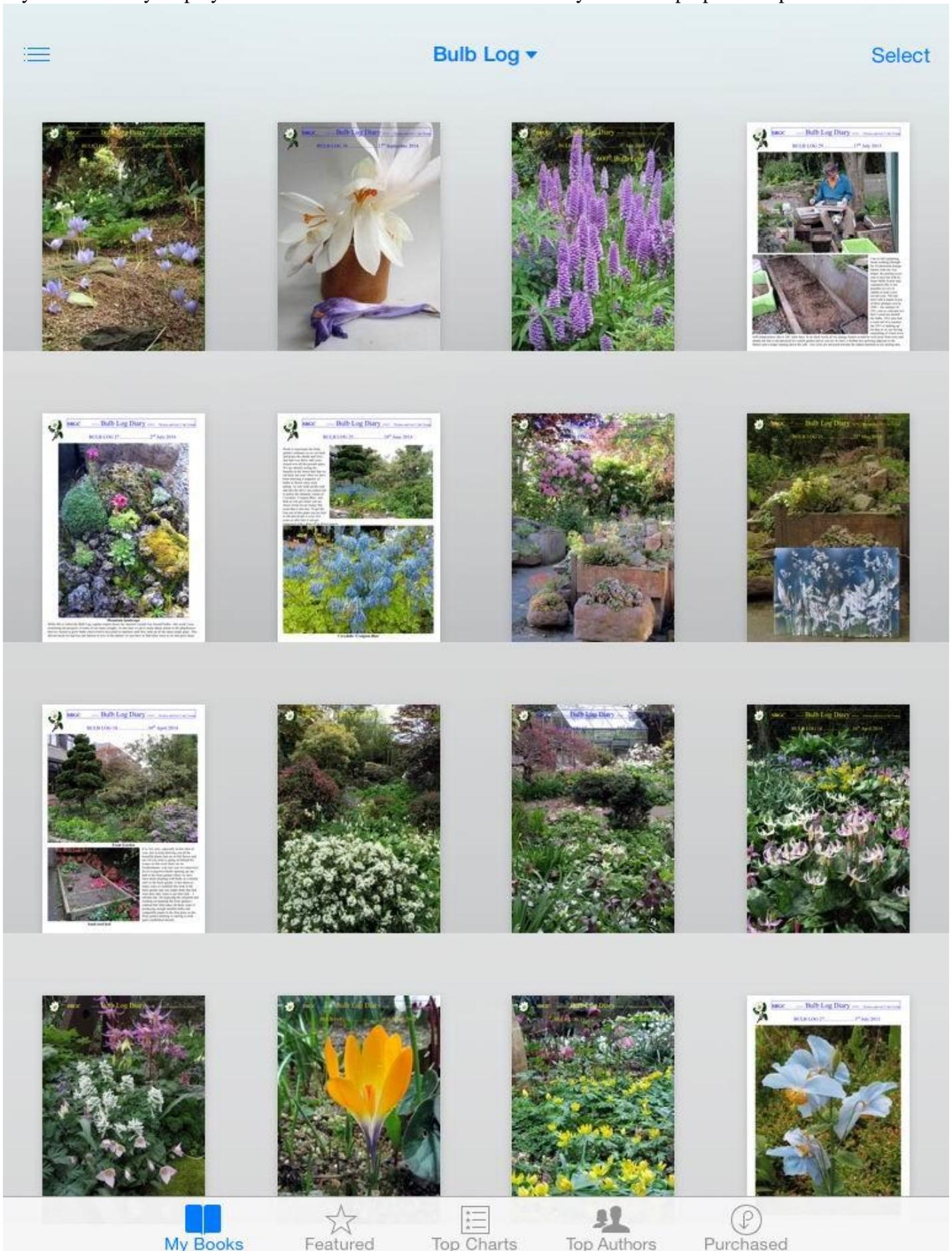




BULB LOG 40..... 1st October 2014



Some readers may have wondered why I am tending to have a full size picture covering the opening page. The answer is that more often than not I view/read the Bulb log, [International Rock Gardener](#) and The Rock Garden on my iPad and they display so much better on tablet devices than they do on a laptop or computer screen.



Screen grab from iPad

This is a screen grab from my iPad of the bulb log section of 'My Books' and I think that those with the full page front photograph stand out and look so much better.



Crocus hybrid

I originally received small non-flowering sized corms of this plant many years ago at one of the small bulb exchanges at the SRGC Discussion Weekend – it was labelled as *Crocus pulchellus albus*. I have also seen it labelled as *C. speciosus albus* but I think that it is generally accepted that it is a hybrid involving these two species. It is fully hardy for us and we also have it growing in the garden.



Crocus speciosus hybrid

This is my original pot of seedlings raised from seed taken from our plant of *Crocus speciosus xantholaimos*: the white pollen shows that another species, either *C. kotschyanus* or *C. pulchellus* was the pollen parent. This plant is fully fertile setting seed most years and it also increases vegetatively so we are able to have it all around.



Front Drive

The Geranium and other summer flowering plants in the front drive are almost finished now but as you walk in your eye is drawn towards a number of clumps of colour pushing through the foliage.



Crocus speciosus hybrid

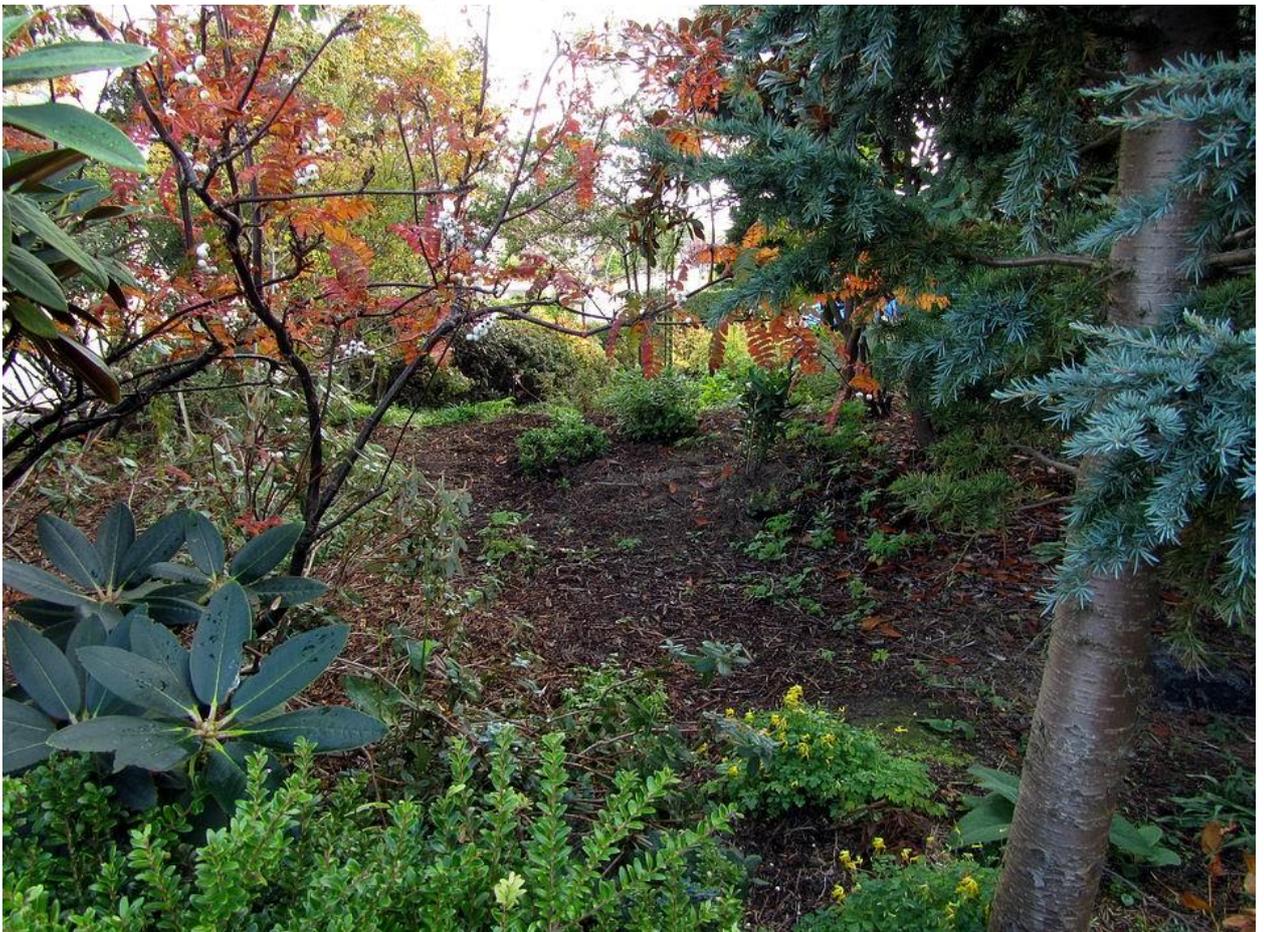
Second generation seed from the Crocus speciosus hybrid that I scattered in the gravel drive are flowering through the Geranium foliage- these in turn set seed which I leave to further colonise the drive.



Crocus banaticus

As regular readers will know I have only ever added plants, including bulbous ones such as *Crocus banaticus*, to the gravel drive by scattering their seeds - these in turn are allowed to naturalise with perhaps a little intervention from me when the seeds are ripe distributing further along the length of the drive.

A brief update on the progress of the front garden after the major cut back and clear out we had over the last two years. Since cutting back the Rhododendrons I have removed all the stumps of those that either did not regrow or that we decided that we did not want. We have been planting many bulbs and other plants in the opened up spaces and will continue to do that.





Regrowth on some of the Rhododendrons that we cut down to almost ground level immediately after they flowed this spring has been good but I do not think that we will get flowers next spring



Androsace studiosorum and *Androsace sempervivoides* trough landscaped with old roofing slates.



This Saxifraga trough filled with sharp sand and landscaped with broken concrete block was planted up with young plants last year– I have watered it about four times during the season each time using a dilute balanced fertiliser with added trace elements. I am very pleased with the growth and

hope that we get a good flowering next spring.



The different growth pattern of the saxes is obvious with some spreading out, hugging the shape of the concrete while others rise up forming small hummocks.



I often think that our troughs are looking their best at this time of year with all that good summer growth and before the onset of the winter when there can be die back and what I now believe is the biggest threat to cushion plants - winter foraging slugs and/or snails.

Each trough is an attempt to create an environment that will allow alpine species to grow outside in our garden. When I showed my first concrete landscaped trough I had a number of comments that the plants may be harmed by chemicals in the cement. This has not proved to be a problem at all in fact it is the opposite with moss growing all over some of the concrete rocks. My problem is I do not want to lose all sight of the rock (concrete) surface but I do want a naturalistic environment especially where plants are self seeding and rooting into the moist conditions supported by the moss on the rocks – just like they do in nature.





I hate using plant labels in the garden and they totally destroy the effect I want to create in a trough so to keep a record of the original planting I photograph the labels alongside plants – this acts as a record of their name, location and the size of the original plants.



Here is the same trough as shown above with the addition of *Saxifaga brunonis* introduced from the tiny plants at the end of the runners and *Potentilla pulvinaris* dropped in as seed.



Androsace x marpensis



One year on from planting much of the *Androsace x marpensis* plant had died out with healthy growth on only one small branch (above).

Now after another season's growth (left) it is looking much healthier but it is moving from where I planted it. I planted it on the top of the landscape and I now think that it is no coincidence that it has moved down to a more shaded spot on the east side of the trough. This is one of the main reasons that I encourage you to create height when landscaping your troughs as it gives many aspects with north, south, east and west sides as well as well drained areas towards the top and moister niches lower down near the trough rim. It becomes obvious to me that *Androsace x marpensis* has chosen the spot that it wants to grow in much better than I did.

Androsace x marpensis

This second view shows how this plant of **Androsace x marpensis** is growing down the more shaded east side of this trough and has not chosen to spread out over the top where I originally planted it.

I have always stated that we should learn from our plants – they are the best teacher we can have - if only we are able to understand the signs. The lovely green rosettes are of [Saxifraga brunonis](#) which grows in damp cliffs in areas like in Kulu Valley, Himachal Pradesh as shown on Chris [Chadwells website](#).



Androsace delavayi

Androsace delavayi also got off to a slow start but is growing much better now the moss has formed creating a supportive community for plants. The Saxifraga brunonis rosettes on the end of the long runners also root into the moss covered concrete and grow in harmony with surrounding plants.



Androsace tapete
The original plant of Androsace tapete had a similar scenario with much of the plant dying out in the first year. The growth of the moss and the close proximity of other plants rather than inhibiting the growth of Androsace tapete seem to have stabilised it. I see this all the time in nature: in mountain environments you will see lots of bare barren rocks with no plants then you will come across a small area where many plants are huddled together growing in a perfect small community. This makes me wonder why we try and do the

opposite when we plant our troughs spacing each plant out so they do not touch.



Androsace tapete
The same plant as shown above this week.



Trough -these are some of my fish box troughs – the instructions of how to make and landscape them is in the latest edition of *The Rock Garden*. No.133. If you want to share some of the inspiration behind my troughs and see what I am trying to mimic here in our garden, both in the plantings and the environment, then look no further than this month's [IRG](#). David Sellars' wonderful pictures of natural rock gardens on the Cresta de le Sele are a joy to behold – I especially like the plant community shown on page 10 – plus the fabulous *Androsaces* growing in [Franz Hadacek](#)'s magnificent garden in Vienna.



Erodium seeds



Centaurea seeds

A few weeks ago I received some nice seeds. I soaked the bulbous species such as Iris, Crocus and Narcissus overnight then sowed them all the next day including the non-bulbous types such as Centaurea and Erodium- all were then left outside.



To my surprise the Centaurea and Erodium are germinating – so I have learned that these species have no requirement for a cold period before germination takes place. I now have the problem to keep these seedlings growing for sufficient time to become big enough to go through a winter – moving them under glass and watering with dilute liquid feed will help. I will be sure to delay future sowings of these until the middle of winter so they germinate in the spring time.



Bulb house

Followers will know that I deliver the second storm, a thorough soaking, of all the pots of bulbs at the beginning of October and here I am – OK a day or two early- watering the pots.

I fill each pot in turn until it backs up with water - having been soaked already the flood should drain away quickly now.

In my attempt to get better flowering on the *Sternbergia* species that we grow I am supplementing the feed with dilute potassium rich liquid feed, tomato type, now. I have a sense that they may benefit from some extra nutrients before the onset of winter so this year I have been adding it as soon as the leaves appear – I will still add the white powder potassium supplement in the spring.





Sternbergia sicula

One of the pots of *Sternbergia sicula* that I showed a few weeks ago has a second flowering, the flower in the background with the narrow petals is the second flower from that bulb. The one in the foreground must be a different clone as it has much broader overlapping petals – it did not flower earlier. I took the opportunity to cross pollinate them so hope to get more seeds again this year.....