



BULB LOG 36.....3rd September 2014



Bulb house

As regular readers will know the 1st of September is the day that I water the bulbs, ‘the first storm’, and this year is no exception. Bulbs from ‘mediterranean climate’ regions have adapted to rest during the dry hot summer period; their growth coincides with the autumn rains and many believe it is the availability of water that starts them back into growth. I have looked at this and I think it is a temperature gradient that the plants first respond to - the fact that I find bulbs where the root ring is clearly expanding without any water being present suggests this to me. When the heavy autumn rains, that are associated with the ‘mediterranean climate’ do arrive they not only wet the ground but in so doing they also cause the ground temperature to fall. The presence of water will cause the roots to enter a phase of rapid growth as they expand into the moist ground.



**Colchicum
montanum**

Some bulbs such as *Colchicum montanum* and *Sternbergia sicula* produce their flowers early, before the roots grow, supported by the store of nutrient and moisture contained within the bulb.



Sternbergia sicula



Sternbergia sicula

This *Sternbergia sicula* flowered a few weeks ago even though the pots were completely dry. Now the leaves have reached the surface is a good indicator that the bulb is starting into growth and the roots will be looking for moisture.



The first sign of the leaves on this **Muscari** can just be seen in the pot on the left, I spotted this as I was working around watering the pots and it is another sure sign that I have my timing correct and am starting to water at the best time in our area. If you live in warmer areas the first watering may be best left for a while yet.



7 centimetre pots

There comes a time when I decide that it is more important to water the bulbs than it is to delay the watering until they are all repotted - that is the stage I have reached.



I water using my own recycled tap on a small hose so that I can easily direct the water into each pot in turn ensuring that I completely flood them all



Now they are watered I will take the time to remove all the remains of last year's growth that litters the pots – if left the dried leaves, stems and flowers will become infected with rots and moulds especially when the weather turns cold and wet - these can in turn spread to the emerging new season's growth.



The two pots that are still holding on to the water were both repotted this year while all the surrounding ones that were not repotted this year have drained away already. This shows how even in a small pot a soil structure forms within the potting medium – those pots that were not disturbed have a good structure with established drainage pathways allowing the water to drain away very quickly. It takes a few good soakings before those pots that were replanted this year will establish such an efficient drainage nonetheless they should still drain away in a reasonably short time of around one minute.



Here two pots which were repotted this year and did not get a gravel top dressing. You can see how the first flood has caused the lighter more organic components of the potting mix to float to the surface showing how a flood of water can reorganise the different components of the mix.



The drainage system that I have under my new staging allows me to collect and recycle all the water that drains away including any soluble nutrients so nothing is wasted.



Tessellated Colchicum hybrid



The large colchicums are starting to bloom in the garden attracting many hoverflies



Crinodendron hookerianum

A second sporadic flowering on *Crinodendron hookerianum* coincides with the fruits from the first flowers ripening.



Crinodendron hookerianum

I like to keep photographic records of the seeds we collect in the garden not only can it be useful for identification but I just enjoy the beauty of these plants in waiting.

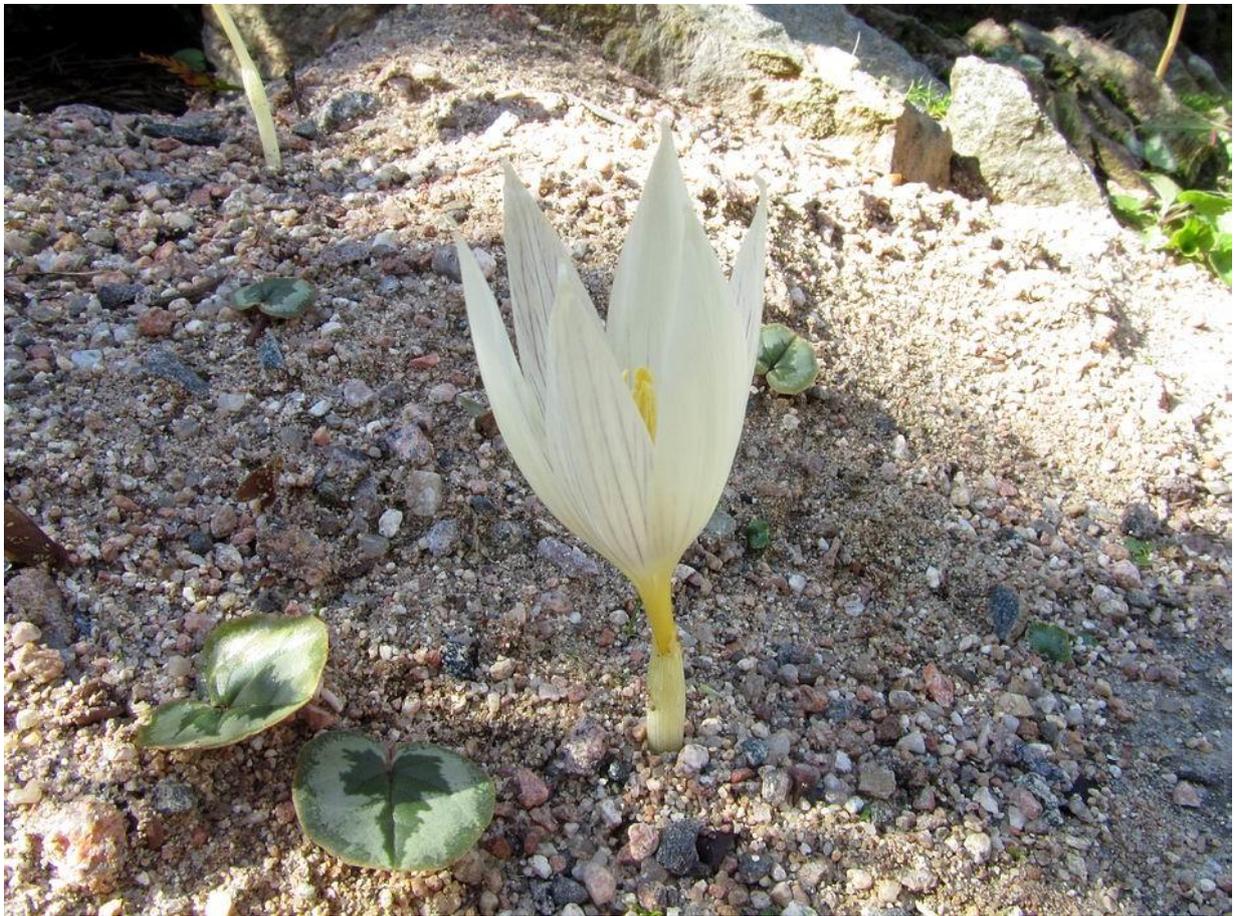
The opening capsules above show the white coated seeds.

This white coat is a thin skin that

I removed exposing the shiny black seeds – which I photographed.



The next day I went to sow some of the seeds I found that they had changed colour to a brown nut like colour so I photographed them again.



Crocus vallicola



The first of our **Crocus vallicola** are in flower now.



Cyclamen hederifolium are flowering all around the garden; the white forms seem to grow particularly well.



So much more work to do in the garden so I will leave you with another **Cyclamen hederifolium**.....