



BULB LOG 39.....24th September 2014

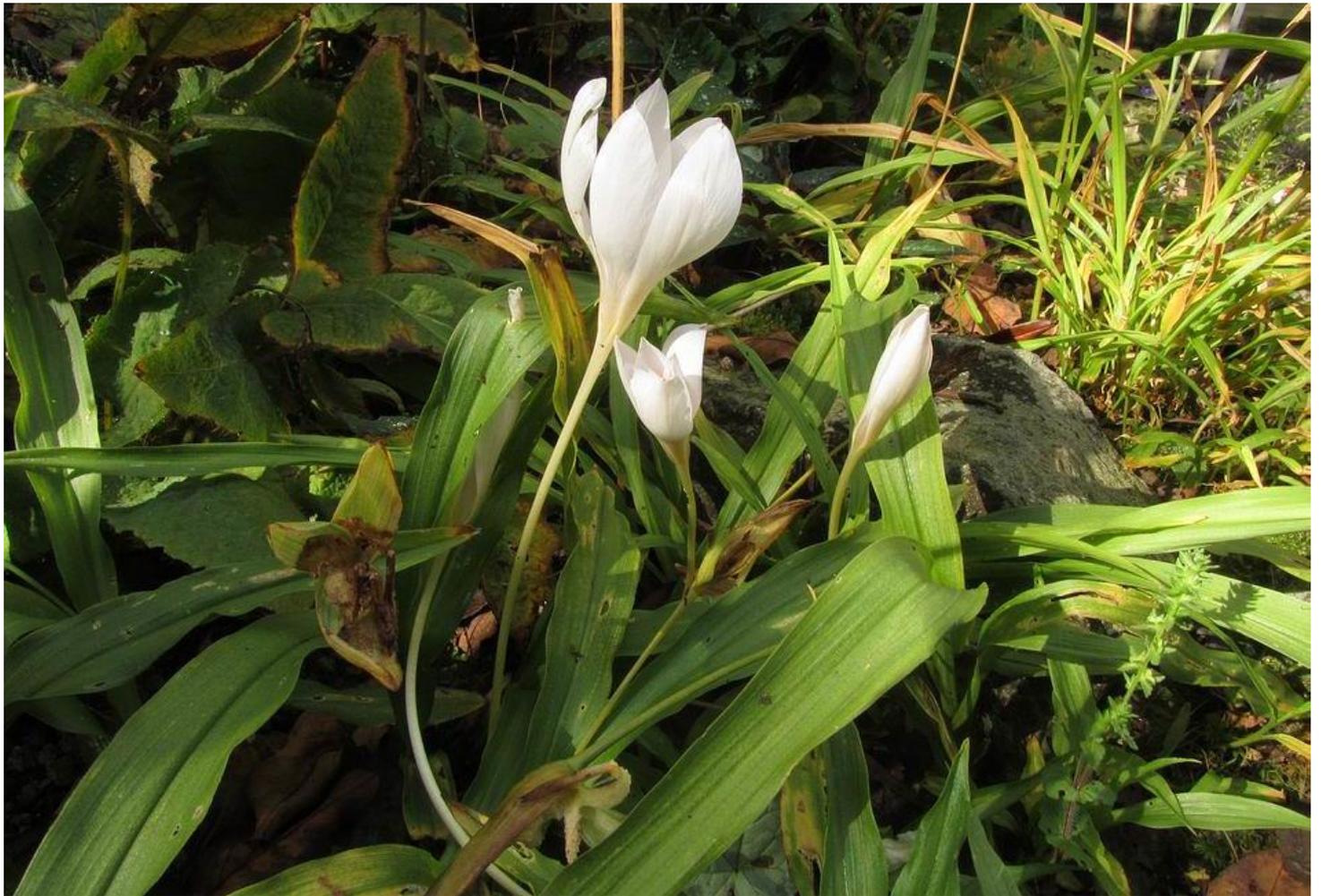




Many of the bulbs that flower early in the autumn are now in full bloom adding colour to some of our garden beds. The group above, growing in one of the sand beds, are the hybrids involving *Crocus speciosus* with *kotschyanus* or *pulchellus*.

Superficially you could be excused for saying the garden looks like a mess at this time of year largely because the foliage of many plants is dying back in preparation for winter. Untidyness is just an attitude of mind - instead of thinking this scene looks untidy enjoy the

changing colours as the leaves go yellow then brown, the changing shapes as they collapse onto the ground, even all the holes where they have been chewed by slugs and snails add something to this scene.



Here the flowers of *Crocus speciosus albus* growing through the leaves and seed stems of *Roscoea* make an attractive and pleasing scene to my eye that reflects the very essence of this season. Spring flowering bulbs tend to be seen in a tidier garden, appearing as they do either before any foliage appears or along with very new leaves without any of the scars of a long season of growth. When asked by a reluctant gardener how to get rid of all their weeds I replied: easy, think of them wild flowers not as weeds.



Cyclamen hederifolium leaves

Of course my comment regarding the weeds was slightly tongue in cheek but I do think that many gardeners have an unrealistic expectation of how your garden can look. When we first set out on the gardening journey we are enthusiastic and crave perfection and instant results. As we mature, along with our garden, we come to accept that we will never win the battle to fully control nature. We have to accept that wild flowers, or weeds if you prefer, do have a place as long as they are not the dominating force, that molluscs will eat holes in our plants, birds will dig up plants, mice will eat

bulbs – all we need do is learn to accept and appreciate all of the nature in our gardens. Of course there comes a point where we do need to take action when the balance gets out of control and the mice are eating all your bulbs or the weeds are preventing other plants from growing then our action should be swift and balanced.



I like this autumnal picture with fallen leaves adding colour to a scene of well chewed leaves dying back as the plants are in the process of retreating underground for the winter.



Crocus speciosus



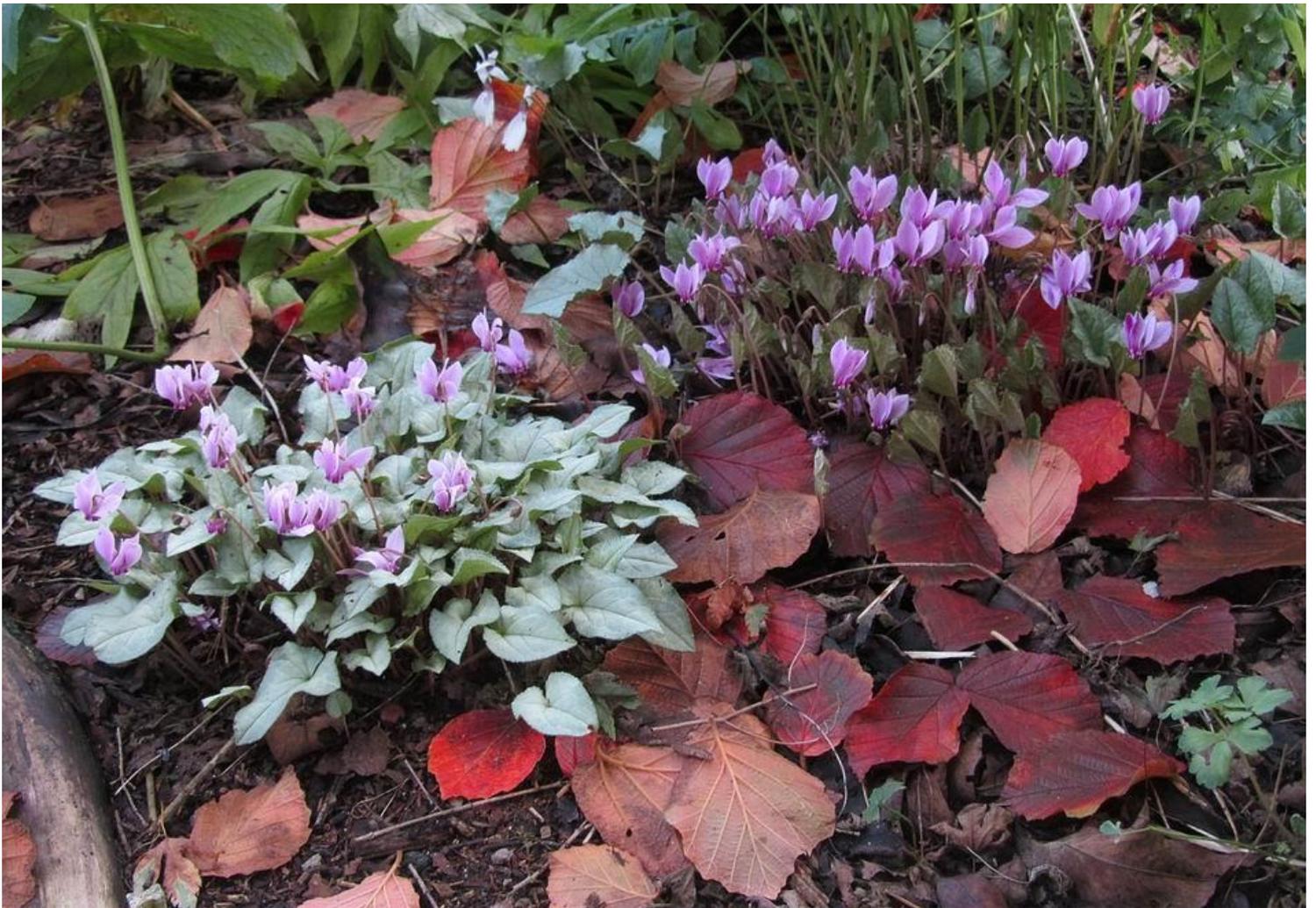
A short burst of sunshine pushes the temperature up just enough to encourage the flowers to open during which time they are visited by the many hoverflies that appear at this time of year.



Enjoy the flowers not the chewed holes.



Colchicum aggripinum



Cyclamen hederifolium

Other areas are enhanced by the many flowers of *Cyclamen hederifolium* – those with the silver leaves stand out especially well in the darker corners.

Cyclamen hederifolium

You may notice in the background of the above picture some aberrant white flowers where only one petal reflexes the others are semi fused and form down ward pointing fan shape.

Some flowers on this plant are normal but a number are fan shaped every year. I do not find this a desirable feature.





Cyclamen hederifolium silver leafed form.



**Cyclamen
cyprum**

In the bulb house I do expect and try achieve greater perfection- if a slug/snail chews flowers there I do get annoyed.



Cyclamen mirabile

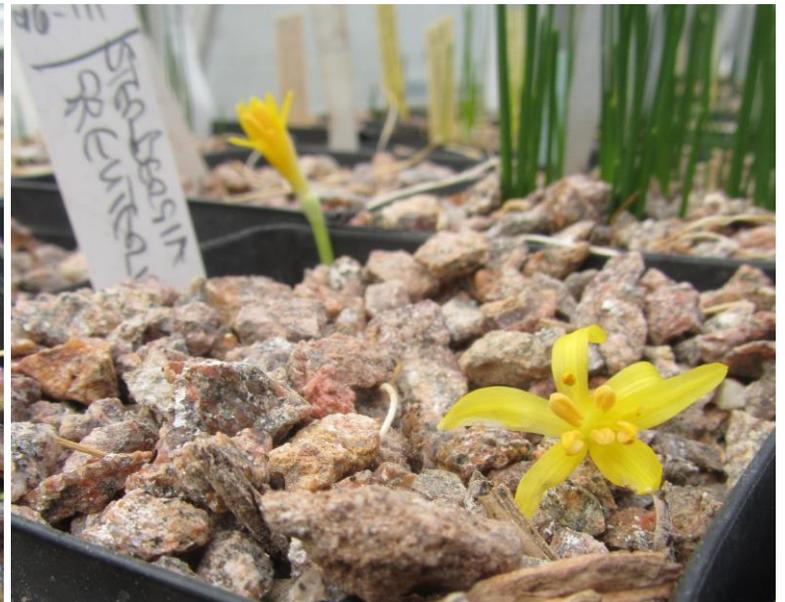


Cyclamen mirabile

I have said it before and don't mind repeating that cyclamen mirabile is my favourite of this genus.



Since I applied the first storm, watered the bulbs, at the beginning of September many are in active growth with leaves starting to appear, for me the main task is to remove all the debris of last year's growth from the many pots that were not repotted. This may seem and can sometimes feel like a tedious task but I persevere and take pleasure in looking carefully at each and every pot in turn seeing the very first signs of growth, that I might otherwise miss, pushing through the gravel.





Sternbergia leaves

Once plants are in growth the pots must not be allowed to dry out and although my general routine is to apply the second storm by watering all pots again at the beginning of October those pots with a lot of leaf growth will be watered according to their individual need. My rule is water in proportion to the amount of leaf growth – the more leaf growth there is the more water will be used up as the plants grow and transpire. Take care not to over water bulbs that are in flower wait until the leaves appear.



This is one of the **Sternbergia sicula** pots I showed last week - notice both how the flower on the right is bending downwards - this form is also producing a second set of flower buds.



Sternbergia sicula

The other pot of *Sternbergia* that I featured last week is more advanced and here you can see clearly how the flower stems are not just flopping over but actively bending downwards pulling the seed pod onto the ground. There are no signs of a second flowering on this form yet.



Crocus (kotschyanus) cappadocicus* and *Crocus kotschyanus kotschyanus

Compare *Crocus cappadocicus* once considered a subspecies of *kotschyanus* with *Crocus kotschyanus kotschyanus*.



Crocus (kotschyanus) cappadocicus and Crocus kotschyanus kotschyanus



This **Crocus speciosus xantholaimos hybrid** grows very well in the garden and is the plant featured on the opening page of this week's bulb log, the seed parent is just coming into flower now see the picture below.



Sternbergia sicula and Crocus speciosus xantholaimos



My final picture this week is of **Colchicum baytopiorum** in glorious flower in the bulb house.....