



BULB LOG 48.....2nd December 2015



Chapter from *Erythroniums in Cultivation*
Erythronium revolutum

Erythronium revolutum



Erythronium revolutum

Erythronium revolutum is the only pink species native to Western North America: it grows from Northern California to British Columbia, including Vancouver Island. While there is some variation in the colouration of the flowers and markings on the leaves it is unlikely to be confused with any other species in cultivation other than its own hybrids. I find it one of the best species to seed around and indeed it has made itself very much at home in our garden naturalizing and hybridizing with other species we grow. It grows well in our cool northern coastal garden where it thrives in both shade and full sun - however as with all *Erythronium*s it benefits from some shelter from strong winds which will damage the leaves.

Flower

Key diagnostic features in the flowers are the shape of the filaments which widen towards the base, often described as being like traditional Dutchman's breeches; the swollen sac-like appendages at the base of the petals; the stigma is divided deeply into three and the pollen is mostly deep yellow. In some of the deepest pink forms the pink colouration often extends into the style and filaments as shown in the example above.



This dissected *Erythronium revolutum* flower shows clearly the diagnostic features.



Some years we get multiple flowers on a stem, typically two but three or more do also occur – this can vary from year to year - I think this is largely dependent on the weather and growing conditions of the previous year when the flower buds were forming. Hybrids of *Erythronium revolutum* will mostly have multiple flowers, as many as seven, so I always carefully check the key features of multiple flowered plants, especially the shape of the filaments, to determine whether it is the species or a hybrid.



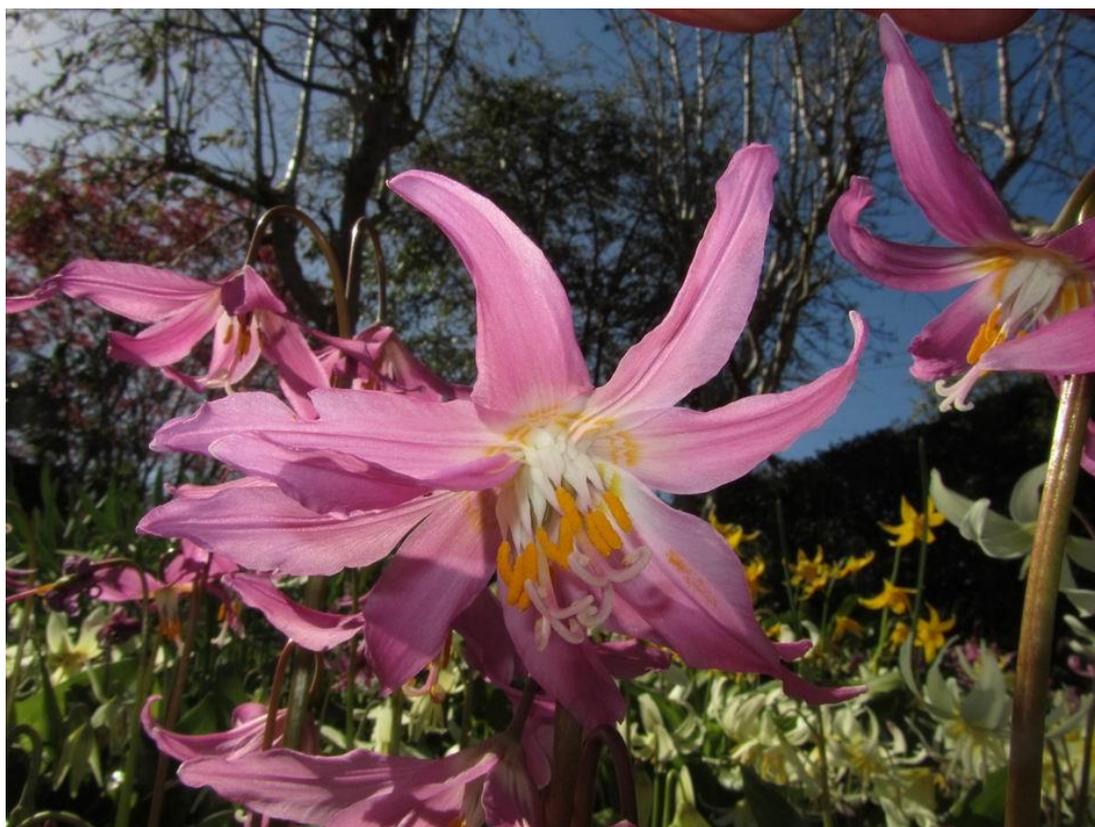
While the majority of **Erythronium revolutum** flowers have yellow pollen (left) we have some that have creamy white pollen as shown here on the right and this feature carries through into the seedlings we have raised from these forms – they also have paler pink flowers. The form on the left is from Vancouver Island at the northern end of the range, it is easily spotted in our garden by its smaller stature, there is little in the way of markings on the leaves and the way the flower reflexes from much nearer the centre than most others.



For the last three years we have had a single pure white seedling that I believe is **Erythronium revolutum**, as all the diagnostics indicate that, and not a hybrid or another species as many of the so called white forms I have seen.



Erythronium revolutum hybrids mostly have different shaped filaments as you can see in the two hybrids above whose filaments both have narrower almost parallel sides. In addition the, very attractive, dark red zig-zag markings are typical of Erythronium revolutum hybrids with Erythronium californicum.



Mutated flower

Occasionally we find mutations such as this one on the left where two flowers have fused into one giving two styles, extra stamens and some extra petals. This is a seasonal aberration probably caused by weather or damage to the bud and is unlikely to occur again in the same plant. It is certainly not a desirable look in my view.

Seeds



The seed capsules are similar to all the Western North American species and can be harvested as soon as they are fully formed.



The seed is best stored in paper packets then sown in late August as described in the chapter on Seed.

Bulb

Mature bulbs of *Erythronium revolutum* showing the remains of previous year's growth attached as a chain. Off-sets can be seen on the two outside bulbs; a reasonably large one on the left and a small one on the right hand bulb. Some bulbs will increase this way forming reasonable clumps after around five years, others remain as single bulbs.

***Erythronium revolutum* bulbs**

A selection of bulbs of varying ages showing the range of shapes and sizes.

The longer narrow bulbs indicate these are still seeking a depth where they find such conditions of moisture and temperature that they can best tolerate.

Leaf

The markings on the leaves do not appear until the bulbs are three years old and they do not become fully developed until the bulbs reach five years of age.

On the left is a pot of seedlings of varying ages, those with the largest, best marked leaves are in their fifth year of growth while the youngest and plain green ones are just in their third year.

Some of the best forms are almost worth growing for the decorative quality of their leaf markings.



Erythronium revolutum with good leaf markings.



Leaf variation in *Erythronium revolutum*

Two self-sown seedlings displaying the variation that can be found in leaf markings – these are surrounded by more seedlings of varying ages – also notice that both these forms have the desirable feature for the garden of steadily forming clumps.





The form I raised from seed from seed ex Vancouver Island with very slight markings on the leaves.



The flower stem also varies in colour from green to very dark red/brown and usually this reflects the markings on the leaves so those with good dark markings on their leaves are also more likely to have a dark flower stem and vice versa.



Erythronium revolutum grows happily with other spring flowering plants where it will gradually form clumps. It is nice to have forms of different colours growing together so the contrast between the dark and pale flowers as well as the variation in the leaves can be enjoyed.



**Erythronium
revolutum**

Forms that clump are always welcome in the garden, the clumps above have increased from a single bulb in about five or six years. It is best to lift and divide clumps before they get so congested that the flowering reduces.

As well as clumps it is nice to have *Erythronium revolutum* seeding around like the group on the right which have all self-sown into the edge of a gravel path.

