



BULB LOG 6.....11th February 2015



I purposely selected the cover picture of a pink seedling of *Eranthis pinnatifida* because it has been slightly chewed and so is not perfect – so often we crave perfection in our plants whereas in the wild we accept blemishes as a part of nature. We really do have too high an expectation from our plants as they cannot be perfect or perform to their best every year. I suspect that many of you were so wooed by the sheer beauty of the flower on the cover that you did not notice the small imperfections – and that is how it should be.

As soon as I noticed the growth appearing from the pots of *Eranthis pinnatifida* a few weeks ago I moved them



from the open frame into a bulb house where I can better enjoy them, spare them from the attentions of grazing slugs and feed and nurture them. I try and get seed from these plants every year so as soon as I see the white pollen exposed I carefully cross pollinate them.



***Eranthis hyemalis* seedlings**

All the more common *Eranthis hyemalis* and the likes have two seed leaves while the group that contains *Eranthis pinnatifida* has just a single leaf.



***Eranthis pinnatifida* seedlings**



This is a pot of seedlings from our original plant that we bought in as a tiny tuber many years ago. The flowers are fascinating in that they are not protected in a bud but simply come through the ground in an immature state. Once the flower reaches the light it slowly develops and grows into a thing of wonderful beauty.



Some stems have two flowers as seen on the right hand side.



Once they are fully formed they are a thing of real beauty. The violet towards the centre are the closed anthers, once they dehisce you will see white pollen.



The flower on the left is another seedling sown in 2012 flowering for the first time. Comparing it with our standard one, right, it is slightly smaller as a more rounded flower and the anthers, while still violet, have more red in.

**Eranthis pinnatifida,
from
Yoshida, Chichibu-shi,
Saitama**

To get these plants to flower from a 2012 sowing I make sure that they are well fed and have as long a growing season as possible.

Although I take them under glass when they first appear I move them back out to the open frame as the weather warms up – if I left them in the glasshouse the heat could send them into a premature dormancy. Also I feed them a very dilute liquid feed, tomato type, every time I water them. It is much better to feed them little and often rather than giving them a big feed every month or so. Just imagine how you would feel if you were not fed for a month then you were given an enormous plate of food! I will switch to a potassium supplement towards the end of the growing period when I see the mature plants flowers fading.



**Eranthis
pinnatifida
pink
Hiroshima**

These are two of the pink seedlings with lovely dark stems and foliage; at least one more stem is just appearing through the gravel with a single seed leaf from a newly germinated seed. The pink colour fades slightly as the flower matures.



You can see the white pollen appearing on a few of the anthers. I am taking care to cross pollinate these two pink seedlings and also using this pollen on some of our standard forms.



***Eranthis byunsanensis* from Korea.**

Another species from that same sowing date is *Eranthis byunsanensis* – a single stem has flowered in this pot while there are two just emerging through the gravel in another of pot of this species.



***Eranthis byunsanensis* from Korea**



I found this *Corydalis solida* tuber lying on the surface of a bulb bed – notice the fat contractile root pushing down so that the new tuber will form underground.



A similar situation can be seen above where a small *Narcissus* bulb was lying on the surface of a sand plunge and a contractile root has pushed down into the sand so the bulb can get back underground. I am not sure just what it is that informs the bulb it is on the surface whether it is moisture level, temperature, light, a combination of these factors or some other mysterious ability.



The growth in the bulb houses is now extensive and one of the most important tasks is ensuring that the bulbs have plenty of water at this critical time of their growth. We are under a high pressure system just now which results in clear skies with lots of sunshine during the day then temperatures plunging well below zero at night. I waited until late morning before I watered; this allowed the frost to lift in the bulb houses and allowed maximum time for surplus moisture to drain away before the temperatures drop.



Each pot is assessed and I water in relation to the amount of leaf growth so pots with little or no leaf get little or no water while those with lots of leaves get flooded. Failure to supply sufficient water at this stage of growth may result in poor flowering next year.



Crocus angustifolia



Many months after I showed the first flower on a **Crocus laevigatus** we are still getting the odd flower making this the species with the longest flowering period in our conditions.



Above and below are two seed raised **Ipheion uniflora** flowers, I love the dark contrasting stripe down the centre of the petals.



Ipheion uniflora



This season I am trying to cross those *Ipheion uniflora* seedlings with ***Ipheion sessile***, above, with the hope of combining the lovely colours with the shorter (sessile) stems of this species.



I have still not been able to positively identify many of the ***Ornithogalum*** species that we grow –but that does not prevent me enjoying them. I was very pleased to read Brain Mathew’s article on them in the latest edition of ‘The Rock Garden’ the SRGC Journal – they should be more widely grown.



A wider picture of the **Ornithogalum species**, shown above, showing more of the leaves and the compact habit – if you have any suggestions to the identity of this plant I would be pleased to hear from you.



This **Narcissus bulbocodium** self-sowed into a pot of Fritillaria and last year I moved it into its own pot - the lovely thing about it is that the stem is relatively short and sturdy even in our low light levels.



Narcissus bulbocodium again; this one I got from Brian Duncan has lovely flowers with good colour but the stems are very drawn in our cramped low light conditions.



This is one of our pots vegetatively increased from the original **Narcissus romieuxii JCA 805** introduction – it still has a number of clones – you can see that some flowers have a lobed corona while others don't.



Narcissus romieuxii JCA 805



Narcissus romieuxii JCA 805

This is a selection from *Narcissus romieuxii* JCA 805 that has a wide flat corona similar to the one named 'Julia Jane'.



I am especially fond of the upward looking flowers on the forms we grow as **Narcissus romieuxii rifanus**.



A group of seedlings ex **Narcissus romieuxii rifanus** – note the *Narcissus bulbocodium*, on the left, growing in an adjacent pot.



This is another self-sown seedling I found growing in a *Fritillaria* pot, it could be a cross between *Narcissus bulbocodium* and *Narcissus romieuxii rifanus*.



Last picture for this week is a rather nice seedling that I hope will increase - the features I like are the flange to the corona the twist to the petals and its crystalline white colour.....