



BULB LOG 40.....7th October 2015





Cyananthus microphyllus is now in full flower while there are still also many flowers on **Cyananthus lobatus**.



We have just returned home having spent four days in Grantown on Spey at the SRGC Discussion Weekend - there we met many friends from Canada and Scandinavia as well as the UK. The weather during those days was probably the best run of sunshine we have had all summer and the highlands were looking very impressive but now we return to driving rain and wind which is hastening the fall

of the autumn leaves which now cover the ground with their bright colours, unfortunately with the heavy rain it is not possible to go out at photograph them for this bulb log so all the pictures this week were taken last week!



I like to review the growth in the troughs regularly, recording their state in photographs – all the plants in this trough are Saxifrages from Karel Lang.



For some reason two have not done well; suffering some degree of die- back. There are common factors –first is that they both have looser growth with slightly larger rosettes and I have had problems with this type before so it may be that they do not like our climate. Another factor I have to consider is that they are both planted close together with the same aspect perhaps that is a contributory factor

however nearby plants with a tighter form of growth are growing well.



During the summer I noticed that some of the growth was looking pale and as they are growing in nothing but sharp sand I thought this may indicate a lack of nitrogen so I fed them with a NPK 7-7-7 granular fertiliser. All but the previous two have greened up nicely putting on good growth; these two plants have now grown into each other.



On the south side two of the smallest rosette forms are forming tight cushions while a larger leaved form on the left is healthy. I always try to work out the reason why some plants do well while others do not - often just moving a plant a small distance can make a difference. The healthy larger leaved sax on the left is around 7 to 10 cms away from the two with die back but even in a small trough this separation can result in different environment with altered drainage, exposure, etc. however my suspicion here is that it is down to tolerance of the different cultivars.



In among the healthy rosettes there is an albino with no chlorophyll – could I be the first to have a white leaved saxifrage? I doubt that it would survive and grow at all and most likely it is just a temporary aberration.



There has been good healthy growth on this **Androsace villosa** cushion which also has a lone, out of season flower.



I planted this trough a few years ago with un-rooted cuttings pulled from cushions then planted directly in position into the sharp sand and broken concrete. The growth of the saxifrages has been good over the few years as has the growth of mosses on the concrete which I will control to some degree; allowing it to grow on some of the rock landscape but not allowing it to totally hide all the rock.



As a comparison this trough was only planted up this year with a mix of young plants and a few rescued from a tired old trough. It is interesting to compare the fresh looking newly broken concrete with the large lump that had been in a previous version.



In this trough **Saxifraga brunonis** which is colonising the moss covered concrete still has some yellow flowers - the other main plants you see are **Potentilla pulvinaris**.



Allium scabriscapum

I received some seed of *Allium scabriscapum* from a kind friend around this time last year which I sowed immediately onto the surface of a seed pot covering it with a layer of 6mm grit.

A good germination occurred sporadically through the winter and into early spring and good growth has resulted in a fine crop of seedling bulbs.

I note that the young bulbs had formed exactly on the surface of the compost exactly where I had sowed the seed.



Allium scabriscapum

The larger of the seedlings on the right I take to be those which germinated first – having had the longest season of growth they have formed long fat contractile roots which were in the process of helping the first year bulbs down into the compost. I must admit I have not studied the exact germination process of *Allium* seeds as closely as I have other genera and I am interested to see that the young bulbs form exactly beside the seed and are not pushed down into the compost at the end of a radicle root. I have written that I use the method of seed distribution as guide to the depth to sow bulbous seeds so I generally sow those that possess elaiosomes, which encourage distribution by ants,



deeply while all those that are distributed mechanically or by wind, such as *Allium*, on the surface. After observing that these first year *allium* bulbs remain on the surface, I will conduct a trial comparing sowing some deeply to see what happens.

The different sizes of these first year **Allium pyrenaicum** seedlings also reflects a

sporadic germination starting last autumn and continuing throughout the winter and early spring. I have replanted the bulbs from both of these pots and other similar ones at a depth of around 3 to 5 cms.



Eucomis autumnalis* and *Eucomis schijffii

While on the subject of seeds, I am still hopeful that I may get a few seeds from these *Eucomis* after I cross pollinated the two plants and moved them under glass.



I have had my hopes raised in previous years when similar seed capsules formed but sadly there was no seed inside – however I hope this time the slight swellings I see will contain a seed or two.

I have just shone the light of my torch through these seed capsules and disappointingly there are no signs of a shadow so I fear there are no seeds although I will not give up hope until I open the capsules.



Fuchsia procumbens from New Zealand is spreading well though the raised humus bed. It disappears underground every winter with new growth only appearing late in the summer then we get a few flowers around this time.



Sadly the flowers appear so late that the fruits do not get time to develop before the onset of our winter.



Celmisia lyallii

Unlike the herbaceous Fuchsia the striking leaves of the *Celmisia* provide style all year around especially when they are lit by the low sun.



Celmisia semicordata



Celmisia semicordata is joined by some **Crocus** flowers.



Crocus pulchellus



Crocus speciosus



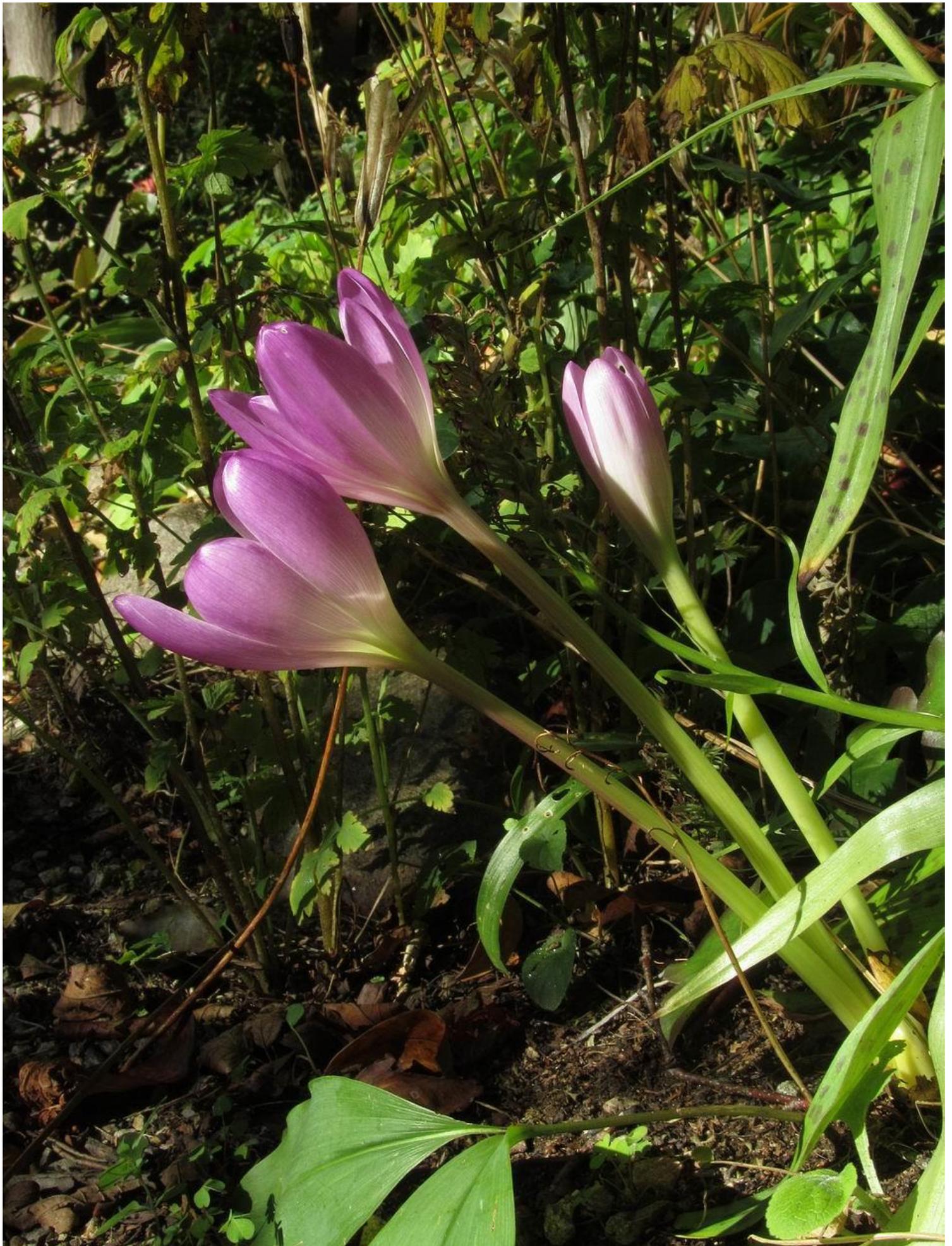
Tessellated Colchicum cultivar



A lovely dark **Colchicum cultivar** in the sunshine attracts a crowd of hoverflies.



Once more the dramatic lighting from the low level sunshine spotlights this group against a dark background.



As I continue to write through Tuesday and Wednesday the rain and wind is still battering down causing many of the bright coloured autumn leaves to fall prematurely to the ground as well collapsing the Crocus and preventing me from taking any pictures, join me again next week to see the aftermath.....