





The cover image of *Colchicum speciosum album* is to me a perfect image of autumn in our garden – the flowers chewed and collapsing are far from the idea of perfection that is expected on the show benches but surrounded by



the spent autumn coloured foliage plus the low sun highlight, it reflects exactly the autumn garden. As I was taking that picture a shaft of sunlight featured another group of *Colchicum* cultivars in an adjacent bed: without moving I used my camera to zoom in capturing another autumn image.

In the bulb house a pot of ***Colchicum cupanii* var. *cousturieri*** is in flower, I also have some plants of this flowering in the outside sand bed, where the mice are eating my *Crocus* but they have not touched the *Colchicum*.



Galanthus regina olgae

We have struggled to succeed in growing *Galanthus regina olgae* outside in our garden - most of the bulbs we have tried have died out after two years so I am growing some under glass. This is a tiny form - the gravel is 6mm and the pot is 7cm square to give some idea of scale - I suspect that the diminutive size is more to do with the growing conditions than anything genetic.

Cyclamen mirabile

I would find it hard to choose just one cyclamen – if forced I would go for *Cyclamen mirabile* - it is so perfect in scale, lovely flowers and a great range of leaf markings.

This seed raised plant is a perfect subject for a pot in the bulb house - due to its small scale it would get lost in the garden where the larger *Cyclamen hederifolium* is a feature of the autumn.



Sternbergia greuteriana

The tiny plant I know as *Sternbergia greuteriana* – there is much debate and confusion in this genus in cultivation and I think hybrids are adding to this – they are all lovely and desirable plants to have.



Crocus karduchorum

A nice flower of *Crocus karduchorum* raised from seed shows off its flamboyant style branches – the flower is a lovely pale violet with some darker veining and white pollen. Also recently raised from seed, below, is the beautiful flower of *Crocus pulchellus* which has attracted an insect pollinator.

This species self-seeds around the garden but that does not stop me wanting to keep some in pots especially if they are seed raised and from a wild source.



Crocus pulchellus



Crocus kotschyanus and Crocus kotschyanus subsp. cappadocicus

Crocus kotschyanus is a superb plant growing readily for us in pots and the garden, if we can prevent the mice from eating them all. The typical golden yellow 'M' or 'W' depending on which way up you read it, in the centre along with white pollen are good guides when identifying this species. While the subspecies cappadocicus also has the same golden 'M' it mostly has a paler yellow throat.



Crocus kotschyanus and Crocus kotschyanus subsp. cappadocicus

I also notice in these examples that the shape of the flower is slightly different when viewed from the side. The main difference that separates it is hidden underground - that is the corm of this subspecies always lays on its side.



I raised this from seed I was given as *Crocus mathewii* pale form (?)
The first flower suggests to me that it is simply *Crocus asumaniae*.

All the forms of *Crocus mathewii* that we grow have some degree of dark blackcurrant colouring in the throat giving them their distinctive beauty.



Crocus speciosus* subsp. *xantholaimos has a yellow throat while typical *Crocus speciosus* has no yellow.



Crocus speciosus subsp. xantholaimos hybrid

I raised a pot of seedlings from *Crocus speciosus* subsp. *xantholaimos* and when they flowered they also had the yellow throat but I noted that a number of them had white pollen, as shown here - this led me to believe that hybridisation had occurred.

When we grow so many plants in such close proximity they will hybridise. Often the only thing stopping this happening more often in the wild is that different species are geographically separated.

This hybridisation is a problem if you are trying to keep a collection of true species but for the gardener it can be an advantage as many of the hybrids have an improved vigour and increase well by making offsets. I have found these particular hybrids to be very durable in the garden, mice excepted, and as well as the vegetative increase they are also fertile producing seed – the resulting seedlings share the colours of the seed parents.

Crocus speciosus ex Picos

Another pot of seedlings is of *Crocus speciosus*, the seed having been collected in the Picos.



Bulb bed with *Crocus speciosus*, *Crocus nudiflorus*, *Colchicum agrippinum* and *Eucomis autumnalis*.



Crocus speciosus

These, growing in this bed, are the darkest forms of *Crocus speciosus* we have, they were given to us by our friend Alastair McKelvie. The dark colour is not just in the flower it also extends down the tube.

Below is a slightly paler form in another bed.



Crocus speciosus



Crocus ligusticus

I have previously shown this species as *Crocus medius* a name many of you will know it as but we should now refer to it as *Crocus ligusticus*. It is an easy species in a pot or the garden but sadly much of the material around is virused, symptoms of which reveal themselves as darker coloured streaks or patches in the flowers and/or leaves. While this plant seems robust enough not to succumb to the virus other species can be cross-infected and they may not survive.

“If in doubt, have it out” has been my motto.



These silver leaved forms of **Cyclamen hederifolium** are doing very well – all I have to do is cut away some of the yellowing stems of adjacent herbaceous plants to open up the space when I see the first signs of new growth from the Cyclamen.



Not only are the parents growing well but I am finding self-sown seedlings - you will notice that they are germinating in a cluster just where the seedpod collapsed. We have no ants that would help in their distribution in our garden so at some point I will lift these seedlings replanting them immediately into a new location. I think the streaking on the flower is weather damage rather than virus.



A few weeks ago I was bemoaning the fact that I had not had seed on either our *Eucomis autumnalis* nor *Eucomis schijffii* and despite the swelling capsules I doubted if there were any this year. I am afraid my inquisitive nature got the better of me and I split a capsule there was a single seed. The plump nature of the seed makes me think that it is

now fully viable and would only start to dry out as the capsule ripens then eventually splits open.



On closer inspection I found one open capsule on **Eucomis schijffii** which contained some brown seeds. When I split open another I found a nice plump one so I continued and found several more. Being a bit wrinkly I am not convinced that the brown seeds are fully fertile, it may just be that they are shrinking as they lose moisture - I will sow them all however and hope for some germination.

I found most seeds on the *Eucomis autumnalis* as the seed pot below shows. I look forward to any seedlings we get and as I cross pollinated the two species this year it will be interesting to see if any the offspring are hybrids.



Eucomis autumnalis seeds sown and awaiting a covering of gravel.



Front drive

Allowing plants to seed is one of the best things any gardener can do in fact I would say that you only become a real gardener when you start raising plants from seed. All the plants in our front drive



the gravel including the **Crocus banaticus** you can just see peaking up through the Geranium foliage.

were sown as seed scattered onto



Crocus banaticus in the foreground with Crocus pulchellus and Colchicum agrippinum behind.

I have always loved *Crocus banaticus*, (in fact I cannot think of a crocus that I do not like) in the foreground is another clump growing where I scattered some seeds and you can see the variation in colours from pale to dark violet.



Crocus banaticus



Crocus banaticus

There is no way that you can mistake *Crocus banaticus* for any other species as it has the distinctive and unique feature of having the inner three floral segments being much shorter than the outer three.



I make no apologies for finishing this week's Bulb Log with yet another picture of **Crocus banaticus**.....