



BULB LOG 22.....1<sup>st</sup> June 2016





**Paeonia  
cambessedesii**

We are all tempted into trying plants from outside our climate zone - *Paeonia cambessedesii* is at the verge of its tolerance in this narrow bed at the base of the south-facing kitchen wall. The conditions in our garden are a long way from those in its Balearic Island home but this is the hottest driest bed we have in the garden. Fortunately there are many *Paeonia* that do grow happily in our cool moist semi-shaded conditions one is the beautiful Himalayan *Paeonia emodi* with white, scented flowers.



**Paeonia emodi**



***Paeonia obovata* alba**



***Paeonia obovata***

A woodland species from higher elevations in China, *Paeonia obovata*, is also well adapted to growing in our northern garden. It is the white form that seems to be more common in cultivation and we have grown it for many years and now we are very happy to have flowered the pink coloured type for the first time.



This picture, which shows both forms of *Paeonia obovata* growing in our front garden, illustrates why plants that are native to woodland habitats grow best for us in our dense plantings under the partial shade of trees and shrubs.



*Paeonia emodi*, *Uvularia grandiflora* and *Hyacinthoides hispanica* also enjoy our open woodland type growing conditions. We have grown our only plant of *Paeonia emodi* for almost thirty years and while it has formed a large clump with many flowers it has never produced any seeds.



**Glaucidium palmatum**, a woodlander from Japan, also thrives in our cool moist woodsy type growing conditions and it does set seed – I show one of our darkest coloured forms alongside the white from which comes true from seed.



**Rhododendron 'Vintage Rose'**

Rhododendron 'Vintage Rose' is a long established hybrid involving Rhododendron yakushimanum.



**Rhododendron 'Vintage Rose'**

While Rhododendron 'Vintage Rose' is a beautiful and reliable plant it comes second to the better forms of Rhododendron yakushimanum especially 'Koichiro Wada'.



**Rhododendron yakushimanum 'Koichiro Wada'**

Rhododendron yakushimanum has a spreading habitat so will not grow too tall - here I show it growing by our front dyke where it has spread around surrounding a Sorbus cashmiriana. Both this and the previous rhododendron were planted there in 1985.



Here are two more views showing the same Rhododendron seen from inside the garden where it looks perfectly at home forming part of our woodland type planting.



**Rhododendron yakushimanum 'Koichiro Wada'**



With pink buds opening to white flowers **Sorbus cashmiriana** mimics the colours of the Rhododendron yakushimanum that surrounds it.



I raised another form of this rowan as **Sorbus cashmiriana 'pink'** which has pink flowers.



Sorbus cashmiriana 'pink' in the foreground with the white form behind.  
Click the link to join me as I walk around the front garden in this new [Bulb Log Video Diary](#) .



Click here for a second new [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement – An Appreciation of Foliage](#)  
Very little of the colour in this picture comes from flowers and this reflects the fact that flowers have a short life while the leaves are there for many months so we should be taking that into account when planting our gardens.



You can see the yellow flowers of ***Paeonia lutea ssp ludlowii*** in the previous picture where I would like to point out that there are two plants in flower, the large one and a smaller seeded plant nearer the front. Having plants of varying ages is another part of my garden style where I want to mimic what happens in a healthy natural environment where there are plants of all ages not just one single mature specimen plant.



More foliage here with *Acer palmatum* 'Osakazuki' behind a small-leaved variegated form of *Pieris japonica*.



Once more if you look closely at the previous picture you will notice some unusual growth towards the top right of the Pieris. This is typical in cultivars that were raised from sports of the original plant - where a variegated sport appeared on a branch of the typically green leaved form of *Pieris japonica*, this was propagated to produce the plant we have. Now we are seeing the reverse with occasional green growths appearing - these should be cut out or they will eventually take over outgrowing the weaker variegated growths.



Another regular task at this time of year is 'candle pruning' the pines - this is a technique where you simply snap off the young shoots as they start to extend. It is important to do it early while the shoots snap very easily, if you leave it even for a week the shoots start to become woody and you will need to use secateurs.



Here the before and after images shows that I tend to remove at least two thirds of the growth as I want to keep this Pine which grows in the raised wall very compact – I have candle pruned this tree every single year.



It is best to use gloves as the shoots are full of resin which is very sticky and difficult to wash off your hands. These are the male flowers which appear as the shoots extend – it is wise to shake the branches before to release the pollen before you start to prevent breathing in too much pollen. I always stand up wind and in extreme cases you may be wise to wear a dust mask.



Here is the pine after being candle pruned – I have also removed any low downward growing branches to create the flat bottom umbrella shape which makes the pine look better and allows more light into the plants I am establishing below.



**Raised wall**



A seed raised group of the beautiful blue **Corydalis flexuosa var. mucronipetala** – these plants are promiscuous so seedlings may have hybridised.



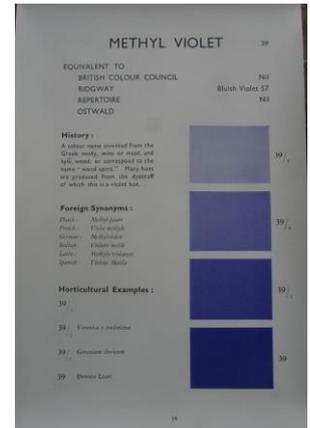
**Corydalis flexuosa var. mucronipetala**



## Corydalis 'Craigton Purple'

Raised from seed of *Corydalis capitata* I have selected this form as the best of a bunch of hybrids.

I am finding it difficult to capture the deep purple colour we see so on our old RHS colour chart it matches Methyl violet 39-39/1.



## Corydalis 'Craigton Purple'

The flower colour lightens slowly as it ages and when you look closely it is not a single hue but complex mix of blue and red layers which is probably why it is difficult to capture photographically what our eye sees. It is also scented and my task now is to work up numbers to distribute it.



### Crocus seed pods

I am always pleased to see full seed pods such as these on *Crocus speciosus*. The ovary sits underground on top of the corm and it is only when the seed is ripe that the stem grows pushing the capsule above the ground.



It took me a minute for me to realise what was unusual with the fading *Eranthis hyemalis* foliage this year – then I noticed that all the seed capsules were missing.



**Eranthis hyemalis seed**

Mice have bitten off nearly every seed pod in that area – they have left seed in other areas of the garden so I will spread it quickly while it is ripe.



**Erythronium caucasicum seed**

I can take the loss of some Eranthis hyemalis seeds because we have plenty of it - I would not have been so relaxed if it were this Erythronium caucasicum seed that the mice had eaten, every one of which is precious to me (the seeds that is not the mice!). I sowed this seed immediately after taking this picture as I do with all the Eurasian Erythronium.



**Erythronium dens-canis seed**

I am also very pleased to have seed from these plants of *Erythronium dens-canis* which are from the most easterly range of the species in Ukraine.



**Erythronium oregonum and Arisaema wilsonii (?)**



Coming back the value of trees and shrubs to the garden where they provide evergreen texture and structure.



**Rhododendron smirnowii**, seen flowering on the left, is native to the Caucasus here it joins trees and shrubs from many continents of both the northern and southern hemisphere to form the structure in our front garden below which we plant carpets of herbaceous and bulbous plants.



**Rhododendron smirnowii flower against the peeling bark of Acer griseum**

Despite our protestations at the lack of summers we are lucky that so many plants can tolerate our temperate climate where we never get extremes of temperatures, neither hot nor cold, with a steady rainfall.....