



BULB LOG 39.....28th September 2016





The picture above and on the cover page show a group of *Crocus* seedlings that I raised from seed taken from our pot of *Crocus speciosus xantholaimos* – from the white pollen you can tell that they have hybridised with either *Crocus pulchellus* or *Crocus kotschyanus* which was in flower at the same time as the seed parent. The original group of seedlings has increased both vegetatively and, as it is a fertile hybrid, by seed so despite losing many corms to the mice, which have started the digging season again 😊, we still have some nice groups around the garden.



Within days of applying the first storm leaf growth was appearing from some bulbs and this *Ornithogalum* species is among the first to respond.

Once you have soaked the bulbs growth will have started so it is essential that they do not dry out again. I have been watering directly into the individual pots with leaf growth – it is common sense to understand that this amount of growth needs more water. The rest of the pots will have root growth underground and these will receive the

second storm at the beginning of October when I routinely soak all pots again just as I did at the start of September.



In one of my converted plunge sand beds Muscari and Narcissus leaves are emerging and just like the pots I will thoroughly soak the sand beds again next week. – One of the advantages of the sand beds and perhaps why the bulbs so far appear to grow better here than in pots, is that they are growing in a much larger volume of substrate. The swings in moisture level and temperature will be much less exaggerated in a large volume than they are in a small plastic pot. Clay pots plunged into deep sand would have some contact and exchange with the sand to help buffer the swings.



I will continue to grow a lot of bulbs in pots because I do love studying the bulbs themselves at repotting time.

I will still be able to lift bulbs from the sand plunge in summer, when it is dry, to see how they are doing and compare them directly with how the same bulbs grow in pots.

The main distinguishing characteristic of *Crocus kotschyanus* subsp. *cappadocicus* is that the corm grows on its side – you can see that here by the way the shoot is growing in respect to the flat corm.

Crocus kotschyanus* subsp. *cappadocicus



Despite being still dry there are shoots emerging from some of these **Crocus caspius** corms.



Sternbergia sicula



Sternbergia sicula

Regular readers will know of my love of *Sternbergia* and my frustration that they do not grow and flower so well for us as they do for others. I am so envious when I see the pictures of clumps of these beautiful yellow autumn flowers growing in open gardens but I am resigned to the fact that with our weather conditions we are never going to achieve that. I will continue to try and flower some under glass both in pots like these and in the sand plunge where I have planted a number to see if they will grow and flower better there with a freer root run.

Crocus vallicola

It is because of our cooler moister weather that we can grow a number of bulbs so well, Erythronium comes to mind, also Crocus vallicola which does very well in the garden and in pots left in an open frame then brought under glass for a few weeks to enjoy the flowers.



Crocus banaticus, Crocus vallicola and Crocus scharojanii flavus

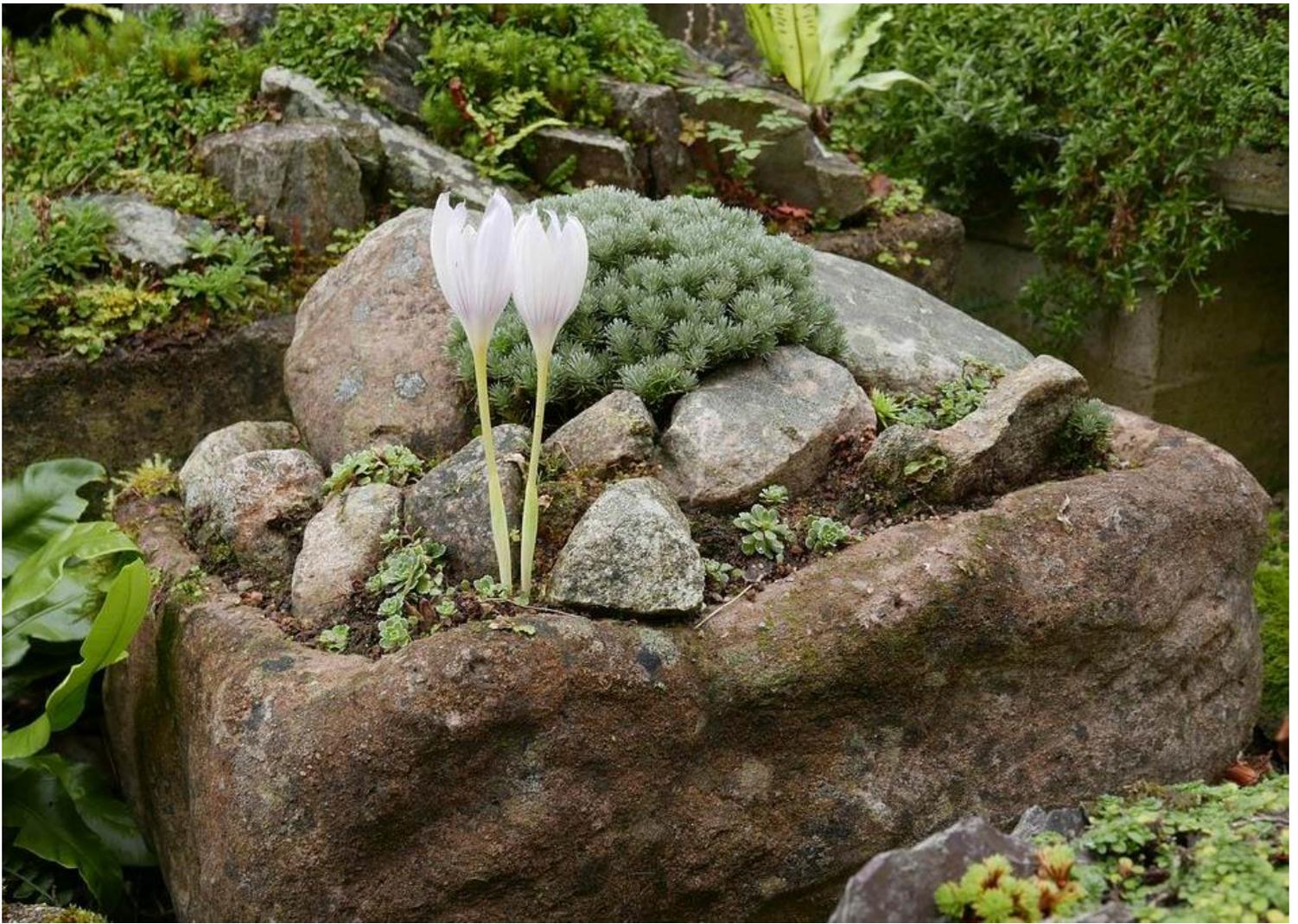
More pots of crocus from the open frame and brought under glass to allow the flowers to enjoy a bit of extra warmth and encourage pollination, fertilisation and seed set.



Crocus banaticus



**Crocus vallicola with
Crocus scharojanii
flavus in the
foreground**



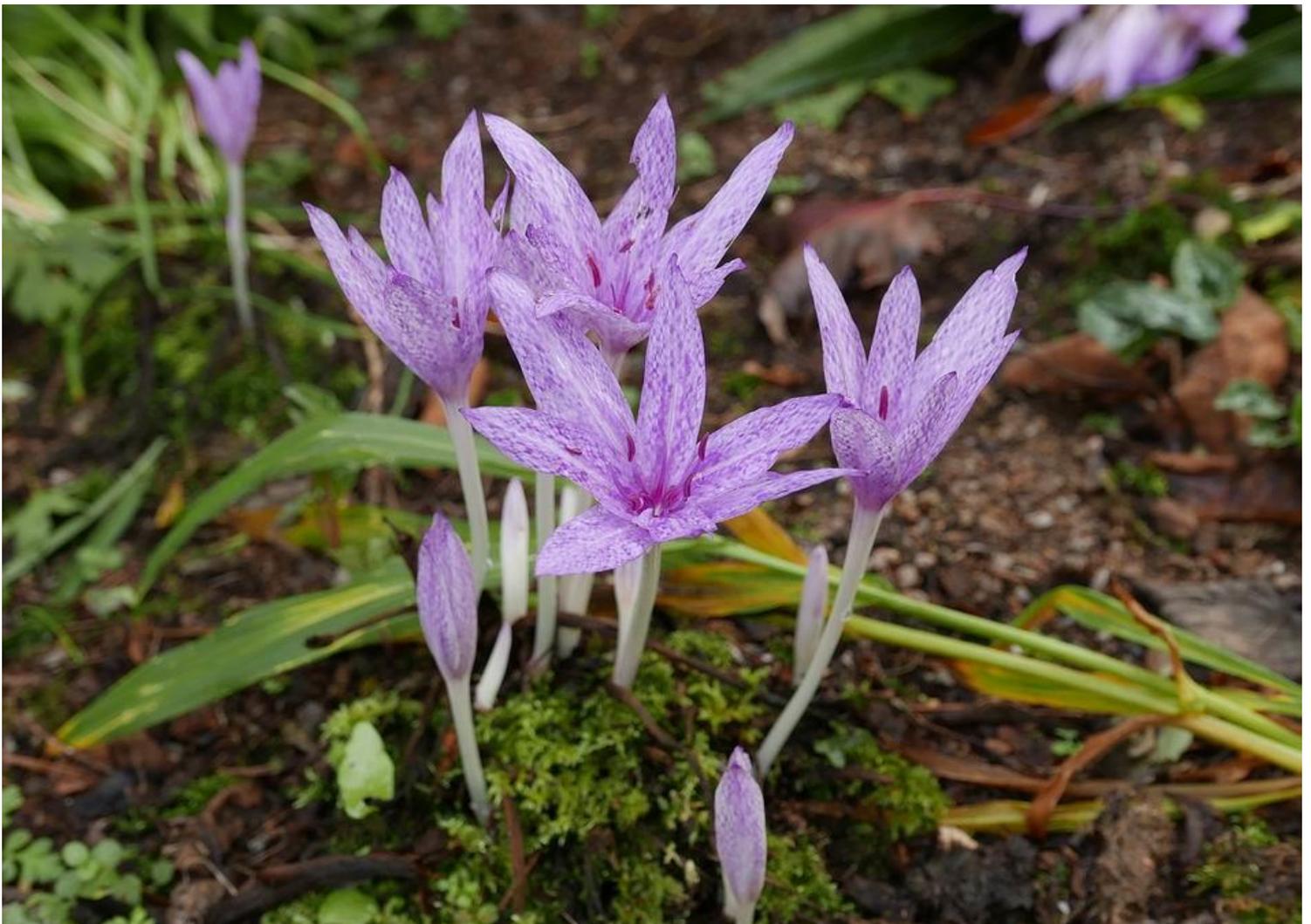
The **Crocus vallicola** in the trough which I showed last week is now in full flower.



As bulbs come and go through the seasons, the structural plants, trees and shrubs, provide interest shape and form to the garden all the year round.



View across the bulb bed which is changing daily as new colchicum flowers open.



Colchicum x agrippinum



Colchicum speciosum album flowers have yet to open but if we get some nice weather in the coming week I expect to see their wide-open wineglass structure displaying in the sunshine.



Cyclamen hederifolium bring colour into this currently shaded area – in the spring it is much more open above before the leaves come on the trees, mostly Acers here.

Looking straight ahead from our swing seat we see this group of troughs and raised beds. To the right in front of the shed is a low raised sand plunge filled mostly with mesh pots of *Erythronium* but it is the ***Crocus nudiflorus*** running wild that brings us much pleasure just now.



A *Crocus speciosus xantholaimos* hybrid beside a group of *Dactylorhiza* in seed.



Moving in closer to enjoy the **Crocus nudiflorus** in both their typical purple as well as the lovely white forms.



Crocus nudiflorus



And one more as the light passes and the plunge goes into shade.



The raised wall that we still call the peat wall even though there has been no peat added for thirty five years contains a mixture of shrubs and bulbous plants.



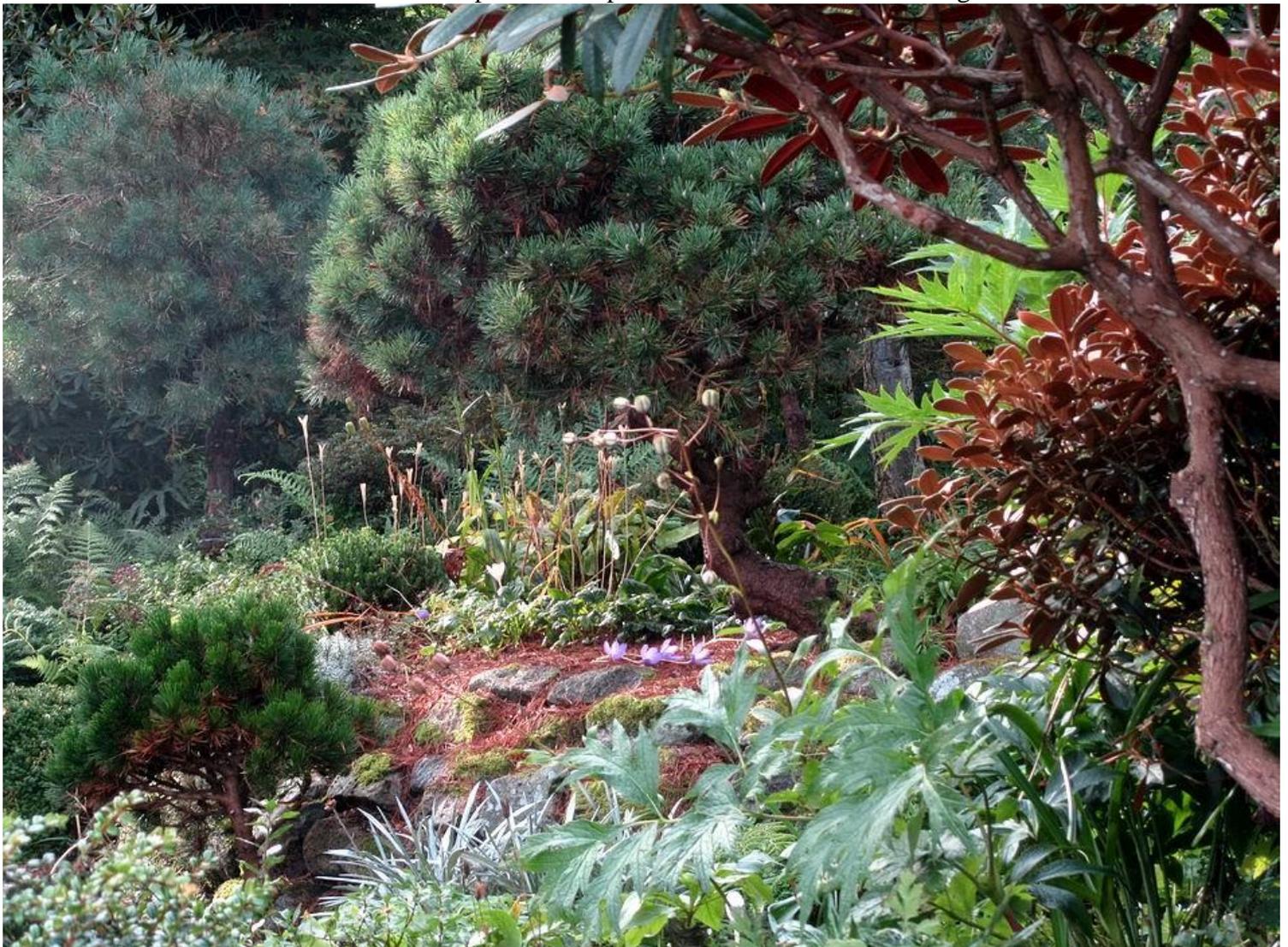
A view of the same bed from another view point also focuses in on the pine tree which I keep small by annual pruning of “candling” the growths. With so many trees and shrubs in a relatively small garden we need to do regular trimming and cutting or else we would disappear into a forest with no room for under-planting.



Even the bonsai need regular trimming; above are the before and after shots of the autumn trim. I have to clip the foliage of this tree twice a year and next spring, ideally around March/April, I will have to prune the roots as well. I have not pruned the roots of this tree for some years and I know it needs done when I can see the root growth forcing the potting ball upwards out of the pot.



Another branch had to come off **Rhododendron elegantulum** – it seems terrible to shred such beautiful foliage but we have to take these hard decisions to keep the beds open and retain views across the garden



The view towards the 'peat wall' that the above branch blocked – now I can see some more Crocus nudiflorus.



The fragile floral tube of **Crocus nudiflorus** is easily blown over or flattened by rain – however there are always more shoots coming and the flowers still look beautiful recumbent and opening in the sunshine (below).





I am not going to apologise for showing another picture of **Crocus nudiflorus** flowers illuminated with beautiful back lighting.



My final image for this week is one of the garden benches that is becoming a potential habitat for planting.....