



SRGC -----

Bulb Log Diary

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Erinus alpinus



This week I want to praise some so-called ordinary plants or those considered too easy and common for the serious gardener to bother with. I could not disagree more with that view - these are wonderful plants that can bring so much to our gardens - so often it is not the lack of beauty that discourages them being grown but the ease with which they grow and reproduce themselves. **Erinus alpinus** is a small but showy plant that will seed around, often growing in the most inhospitable locations such as on walls.

I think all plants work best when they appear in colonies of mixed colours. Seedlings are inclined to match the parent in colour so if you only have a single colour form the seedlings will be similar so you need to introduce different colours and group them together then you will get a wider range.



The *Erinus* in the trough above were all established from seed from a deep coloured form scattered on the limestone rocks so, apart from a seedling in the back, they share a common colour - contrast that with the trough below and the one in the cover picture where I scattered seed from a mixture of forms.



Erinus alpinus

It is very easy to establish *Erinus* by scattering the seeds where you want them to grow – depending of the substrate they will start to flower in the second year - after that you can choose to leave them to seed around. The various *Dactylorhiza* you will see in these pictures have also sown themselves.



Erigeron scopulinus



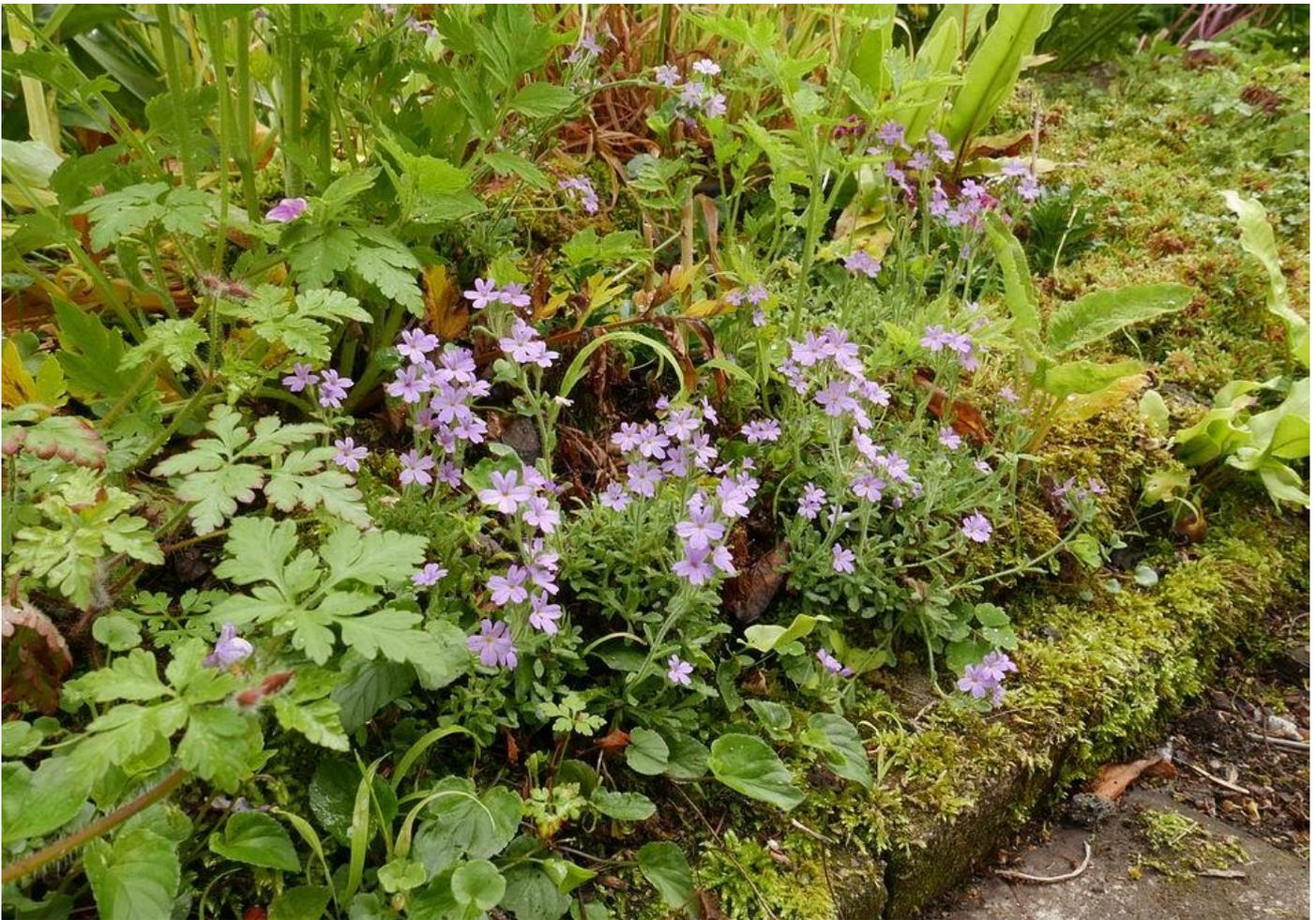
**Erigeron
scopolinus**

Erigeron scopolinus is another of these easy plants that is often overlooked. It quickly forms rock-hugging mats covered in small white flowers and while it has never set seed for us it is very easy to propagate. It roots as it spreads so you can easily cut off bits that are already rooted

or if you take cuttings in the spring or late summer, provided it's not hot and dry, these will root rapidly.



In this bed between a path and the bulb bed 'ordinary' ferns, grasses and other self seeders combine to make attractive plantings bringing interest and decoration now the spring bulbs have gone back underground.



Erinus alpinus, *Viola*, *Geranium* along with a mossy saxifrage as well as moss all form an attractive edge.



Further along the same bed plants of ***Ramonda nathaliae*** are joined by ***Cymbalaria muralis***; another charming plant that is not, in my view, used enough in gardens. Commonly seen growing in walls it is a runner when planted but can be controlled if you wish.



Cymbalaria muralis

It does no harm to the other plants and its delightful flowers and attractive leaves are a welcome highlight.

Meconopsis

Plants that seed around freely are often called weeds a word I prefer not to use: mostly I will refer to them as wild flowers if that is what they are or volunteers if they are cultivars.

Meconopsis are among the plants that volunteer in our garden, I am sure there are not many that would refer to them as weeds.

I did not plant any of the Meconopsis in this picture but I am very happy to allow them to stay - although the ones in the foreground will have to be disturbed



when I lift the Erythronium plunge baskets - I will lift them carefully and replant the Meconopsis elsewhere.



Pseudofumaria alba

Formally known as Corydalis, Pseudofumaria comes in two colour forms yellow and white, they both seed around our garden – depending on where they volunteer I will decide if they are allowed to grow. They are very welcome in bulb beds because they only come into growth when the bulbs are going underground for the summer. The best way to control the spread of prodigious Self-seeders is not to

let the seed ripen by removing the stems as the flowers fade - this is far less work than having to remove hundreds of seedlings.



We also allow **Meconopsis cambrica** in various colour forms to seed around but do limit the number of seed capsules that ripen by dead heading as the flowers fade; a procedure that also encourages more flowers to develop.



I also find **Bellis perennis**, the common daisy that grows in lawns, is also well worth growing especially in the gravel area around the paths where it forms neat clumps of foliage with a long progression of flowers. This daisy is far more decorative than many of the more 'challenging' compositae and it is easy to grow. I am not suggesting that you should not grow these other challenging plants rather that you should consider looking at the aesthetics of these volunteers and easy plants with an open mind.



We only ever introduced the dwarf species of **Aquilegia** to the garden, mostly less than 30cms tall, but over the years they have hybridised freely with the help of the bees and now the majority are tall plants - this nice pink form is shorter than most so I will encourage it while dead heading the taller ones.



The yellow flowers of *Meconopsis cambrica* appear all around the garden visually linking different areas here it is growing through *Celmisia bonplandii*(?) a mat-forming daisy from New Zealand with a trough planted up with *Armeria maritima* grown from cuttings collected at the Aberdeen seaside.



**Ramonda
myconi**

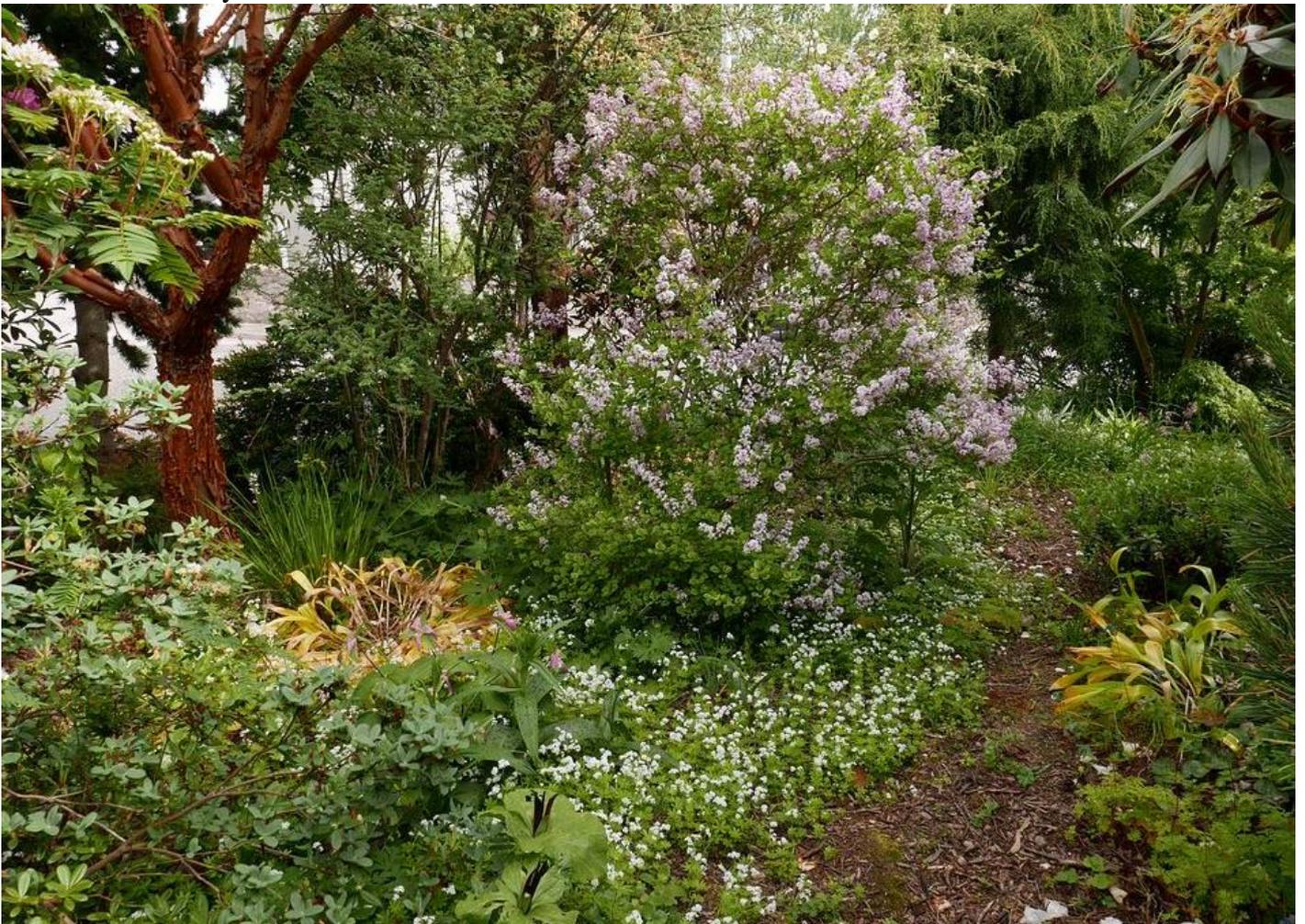
It is the turn of a pink form of Ramonda myconi to flower in this trough now the earlier flowering Ramonda nathaliae has gone over.



Next to the Ramonda is a trough full of grasses ferns and Dactylorhiza, another plant that seeds itself around the garden. I find myself increasingly interested in finding short, clump forming grasses to bring a more natural feel to our plantings – I have collected these around Scotland.



This is typical of the natural style of planting I am trying to create with various plants sharing the same space as the *Erythronium* now they are in seed.

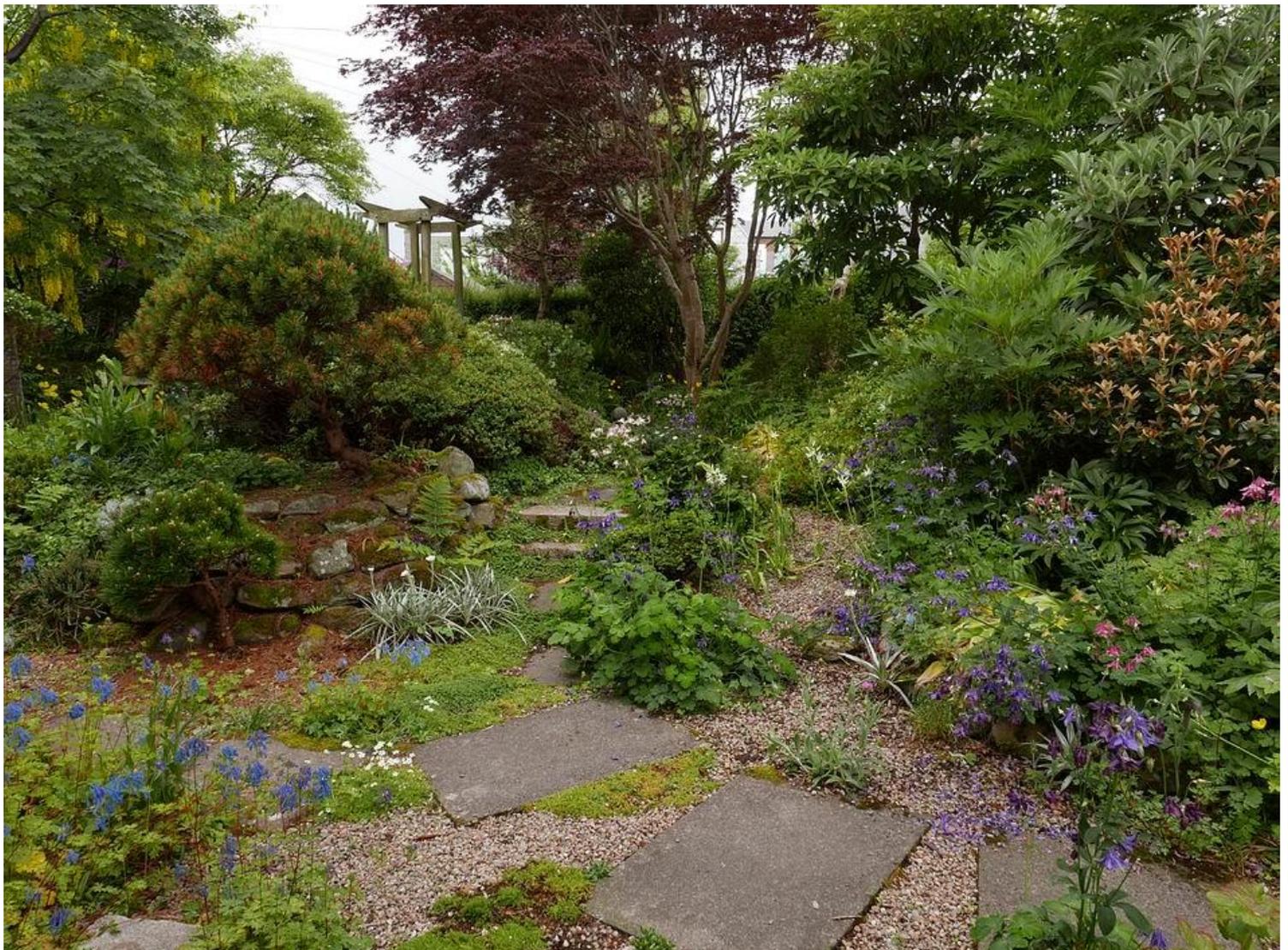


The natural style is enhanced in the front garden by a carpet of *Gallium odoratum* giving a woodland feel.



**Dicentra
formosa**

In areas of deeper shade *Dicentra formosa* forms the carpet and brings interest once the early flowering plants and bulbs have finished their display.



Back garden view



If you look in the gravel between the slabs you will see clumps of this mossy saxifrage which also seeds around softening the edges of the slabs.



Corydalis 'Craigton Blue' was such a volunteer a hybrid between *Corydalis omeiana* and *flexuosa* that seeded into this gravel area in front of the bed where the parents were growing.



Corydalis 'Craigton Blue'





This beautiful scene with **Camassia leichtlinii** and **Aquilegia** flowers were all volunteers, my decision is to leave them. I will dead head the majority of the Aquilegia but will collect and spread the Camassia seed into other areas.

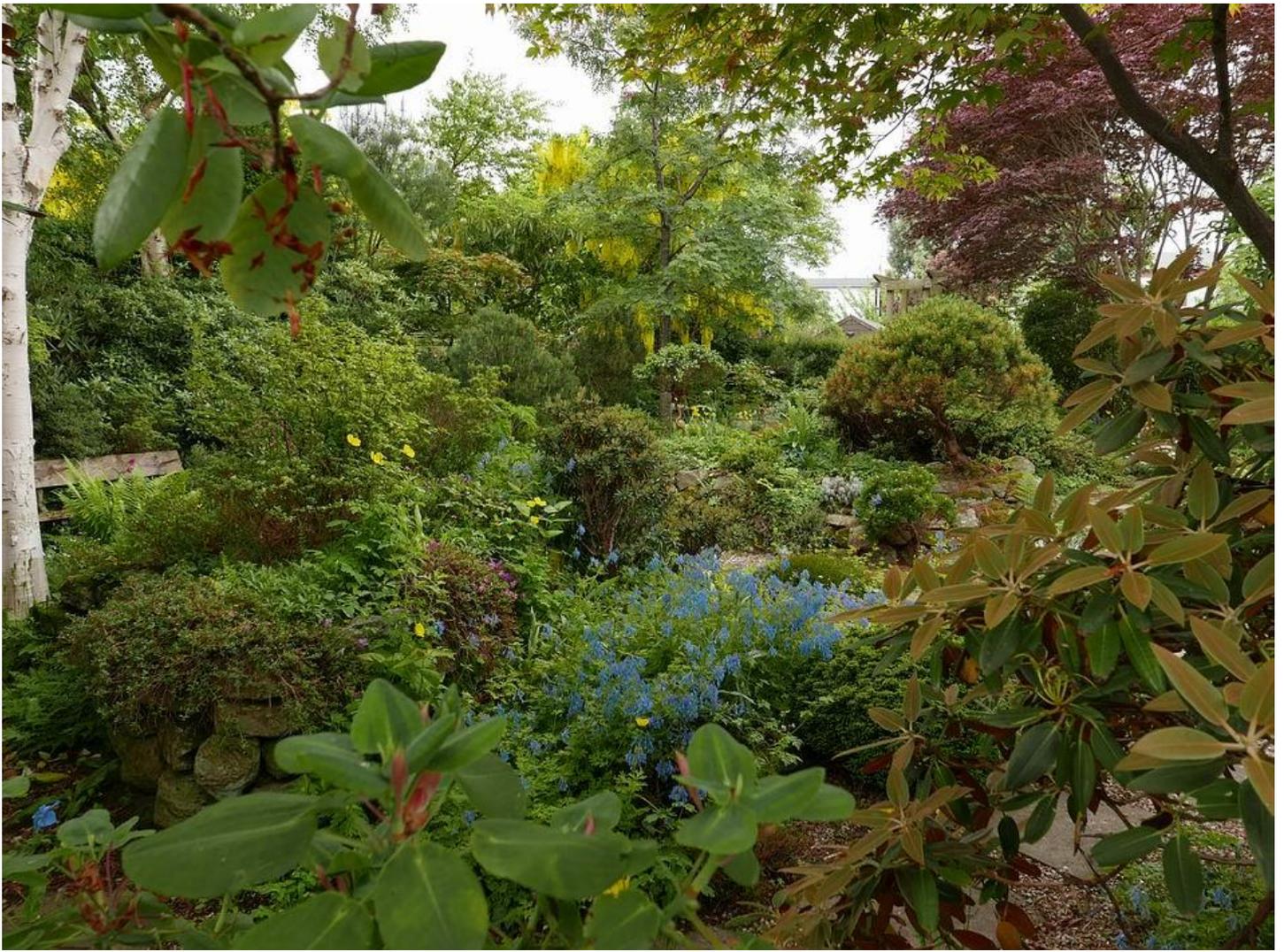


Garden view with **Corydalis 'Craigton Blue'**, **Meconopsis cambrica** and **Aquilegia**.

The next series of images gives you a flavour of the garden in early June and illustrates how we are trying to create the feeling of a natural landscape albeit with very unnatural plantings.



Trees and shrubs are extremely important when creating a garden landscape.



The landscape style is reflected in the trough area with some bonsai trees.



Laburnum is one of the most dramatic flowering trees in the garden at this time of year.



Laburnum × watereri a hybrid between two mountain species *Laburnum anagyroides* and *Laburnum alpinum*.



I think it is the addition of the ordinary plants that go towards creating an extraordinary garden scene – that is my opinion - why not share yours on the [Bulb Log Feed Back pages](#) or elsewhere on the [SRGC Forum](#).

Also click this link to see the [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement - in praise of the ordinary](#)