



BULB LOG 24.....14th June 2017





The cover picture features a selection of *Aquilegia* flowers which are seeding around our garden - more of that later.

The flowers of this ***Paeonia ostii* hybrid** are huge – easily the size of a dinner plate and bigger than those of the *Paeonia ostii* 'Feng Dan Bai' below



***Paeonia ostii* 'Feng Dan Bai'**



Meconopsis baileyi

Dactylorhiza purpurella, Phlox douglasii and Oxalis 'Ione Hecker' are among the plants flowering in the raised slab beds where they combine to make colourful combinations.





Edrianthus serpyllifolius



The seed capsules of **Erythronium sibiricum** are now ripening so it is time to collect and sow the seed. It is interesting to note the degree of seed set between the different baskets in the sand plunges - this one flowered early when the weather was cold and damp and has noticeably less seed set than the ones below which flowered a week or so later.



Erythronium sibiricum



I was too late for one capsule which had already split shedding the contents onto the narrow gravel path so I carefully picked out the seeds with a pair of tweezers - I had to be careful not to pick up the similar looking failed buds blown from a Sorbus by the recent strong winds.



Erythronium sibiricum

A successful seed set is dependent on a number of factors one being the weather – only around half of the seed formed in this capsule, you can see the tiny unfertilised seed, indicating a change of conditions while the flower was fertile.



Even if the seed is formed there are other factors that can prevent a good seed collection like these caterpillars which I found within one capsule alongside the remains of the seed they had digested.

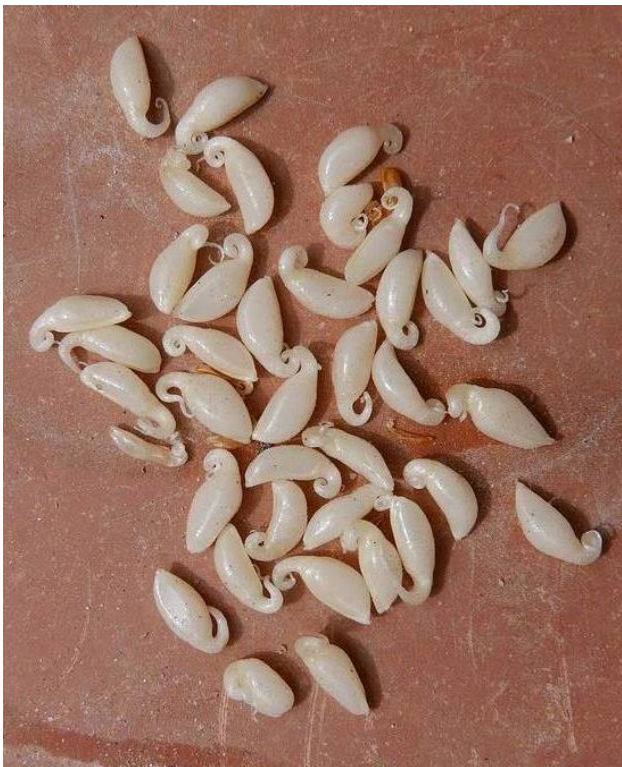


**Erythronium caucasicum
pink form**



I am delighted to have a good seed set on the two pink forms of *Erythronium caucasicum* that we flowered for the first time in March.

When they were in flower I cross pollinated them with my paint brush on a number of days and now I have my reward. It is best to sow the seed of the Eurasian *Erythronium* such as this immediately to get the best germination results - if you get dry seed soak it overnight before sowing.





Another first for us is to get some seed to set on **Hermodactylus tuberosus** – this is all down to how well they are growing in the bulb house sand bed.



Corydalis 'Craigton Purple' and **Corydalis 'Craigton Blue'**



Corydalis 'Craigton Purple' and Corydalis 'Craigton Blue'

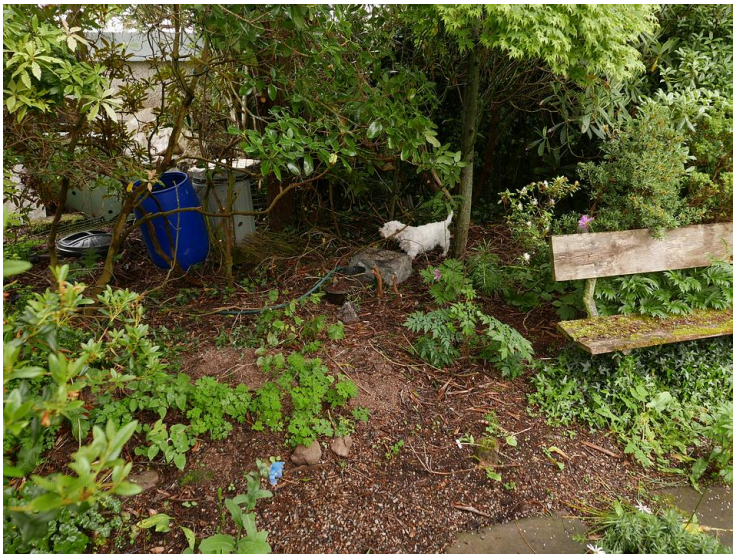
I took the advantage while both hybrids were in flower to take a number of comparison photographs. 'Craigton Purple' tends to flower a few weeks ahead of 'Craigton Blue' but there is an overlap.



Garden benches

Perhaps it is time that I restored these garden benches!





The benches will have to wait as I have a number of other projects on the go. One is reclaiming the area in front of the compost heaps which have been screened by Rhododendrons and Pieris shrubs but over the years these have taken over the entire bed so I have been cutting them back to allow me to open up and reclaim the planting area towards the front.

Gardens cannot be frozen in time they evolve through the years - the plants grow and mature until intervention becomes necessary. The gardener's taste of what they want from a garden also matures and develops with the passing of time influenced by knowledge gained, changing fashions and desires.



Garden in 1987

This is an image from thirty years ago when we still had grass - the seat is the same one as seen above with the area in question to the left you may also recognise the metal sculpture which still sits in the same spot but the surroundings are very different.

Garden projects tend to have knock on effects where one job leads to another and my decision to reclaim this bed was partially influenced by my decision to stop growing so many Erythroniums in polystyrene boxes, the areas where the boxes sit is shown below and is another project I have started. Cutting back on the number of boxes means that I will have a number of Erythroniums bulbs to plant out which are destined to go into the bed in front of the compost heaps shown above.

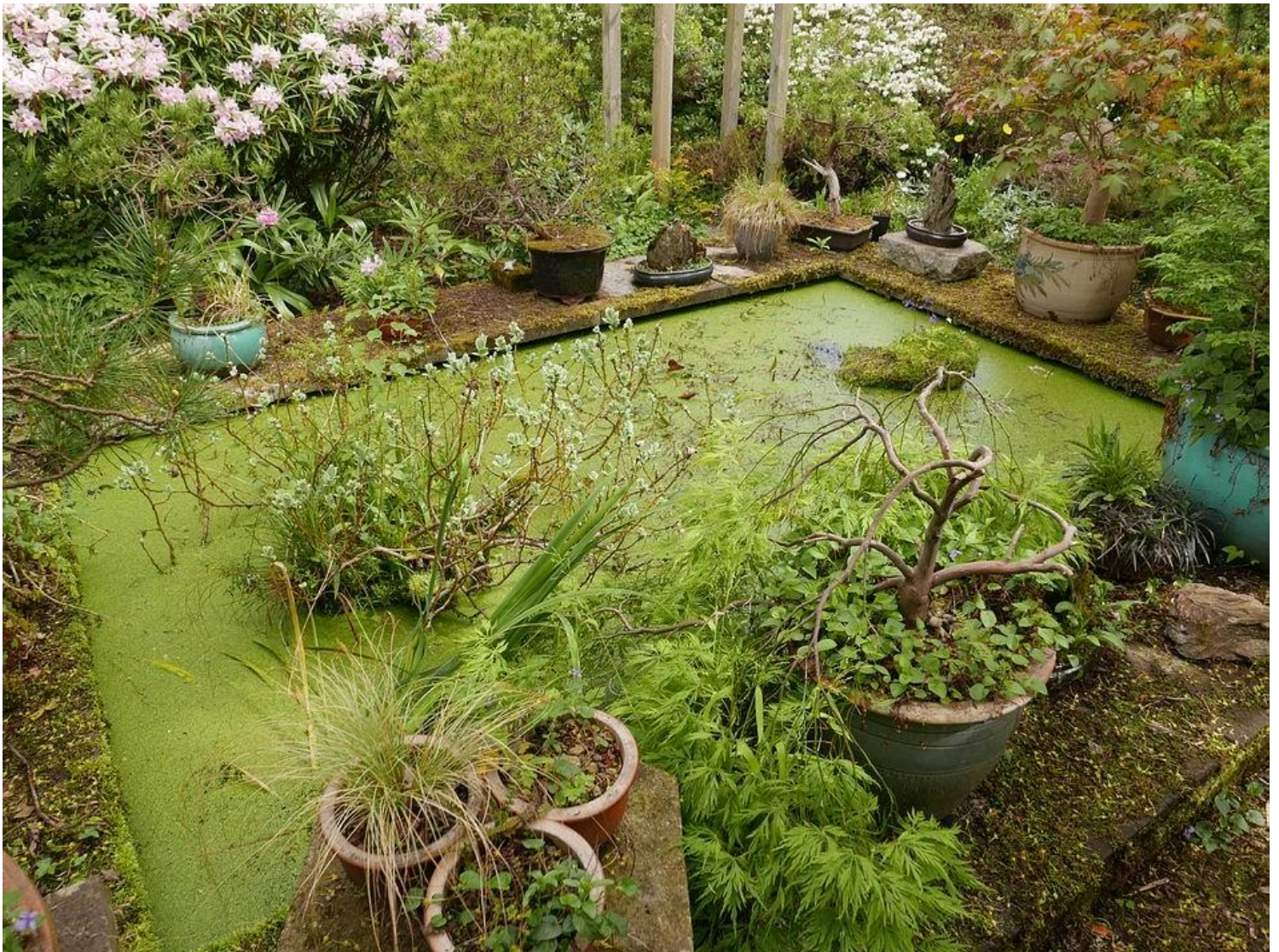


The plan is to make a raised bed where the polystyrene boxes currently sit, incorporating the concrete troughs already there, such as the Ramonda trough. I intend to work with the materials that I already have in the garden so the infill for raised bed will be made from a mixture of gravel, garden compost and leaf mould taken from the compost heaps. The sides will be a made up of a mixture of stones and troughs - my intention is to extend and blend the slab crevice style of the Ramonda trough into the raised bed. A first rough try out is shown below - watch for updates as this project continues through the summer.





The area where the boxes sit was originally laid out to accommodate a large wooden sculpture shown above left in another picture from 1985 – at that time we had not removed the entire hedge to unify what was originally two gardens, the pond sits to the right with another early picture of a very new stark looking pond when compared to the recent picture below,



Pond

This introduces another new project involving the pond. The pond is surrounded by a slab edging raised up on some bricks - now I am lifting the slabs along one short edge, seen on the left hand side in this picture, to create a bed along that side of the pond.



Looking across the pond towards the new bed I am creating at the far side.



With the slabs lifted I filled the gap with compost then planted it up with grasses, ferns, Dactylorhiza, etc to create a natural wild looking edge to this side of the pond – the fun now is to see how it develops.

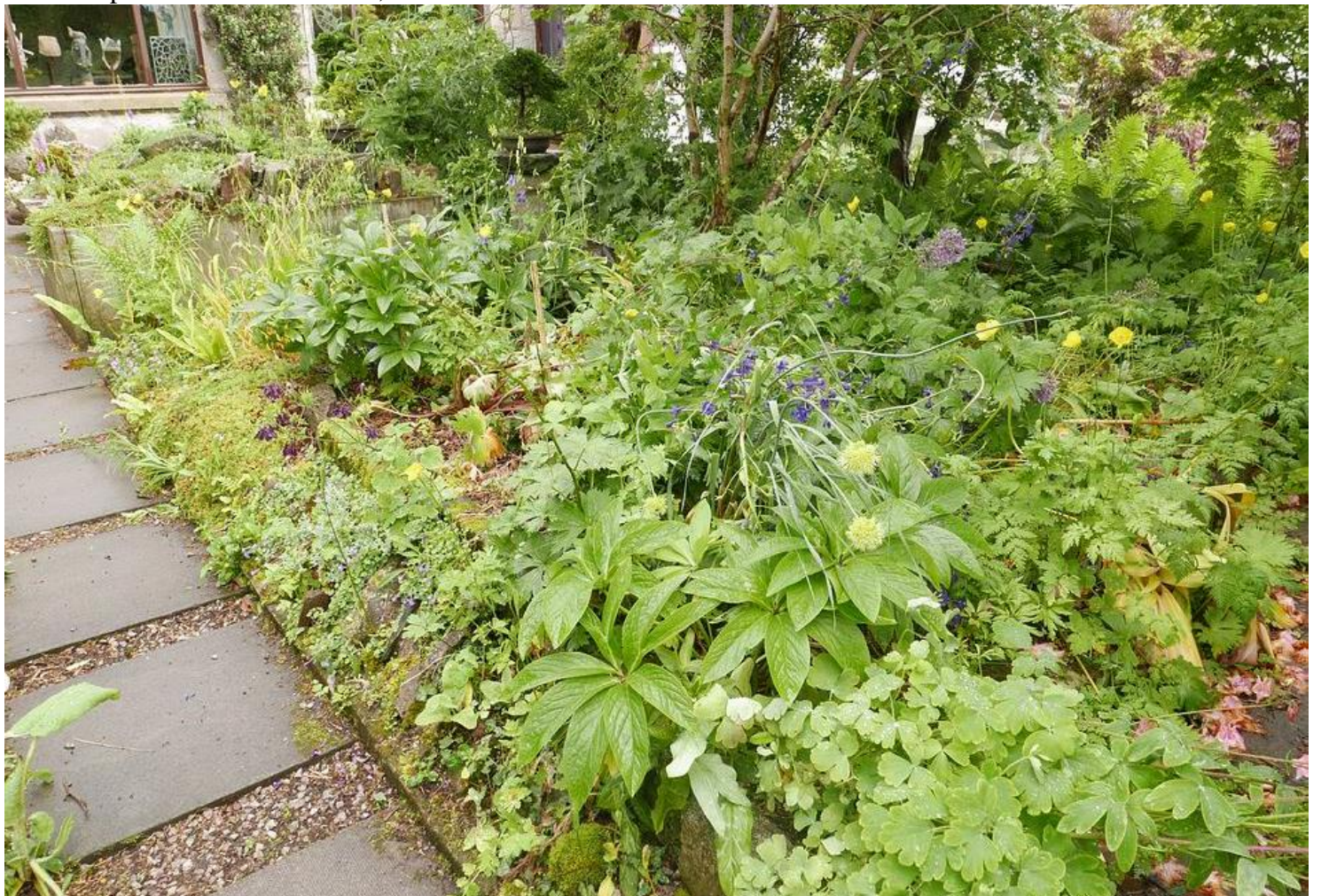


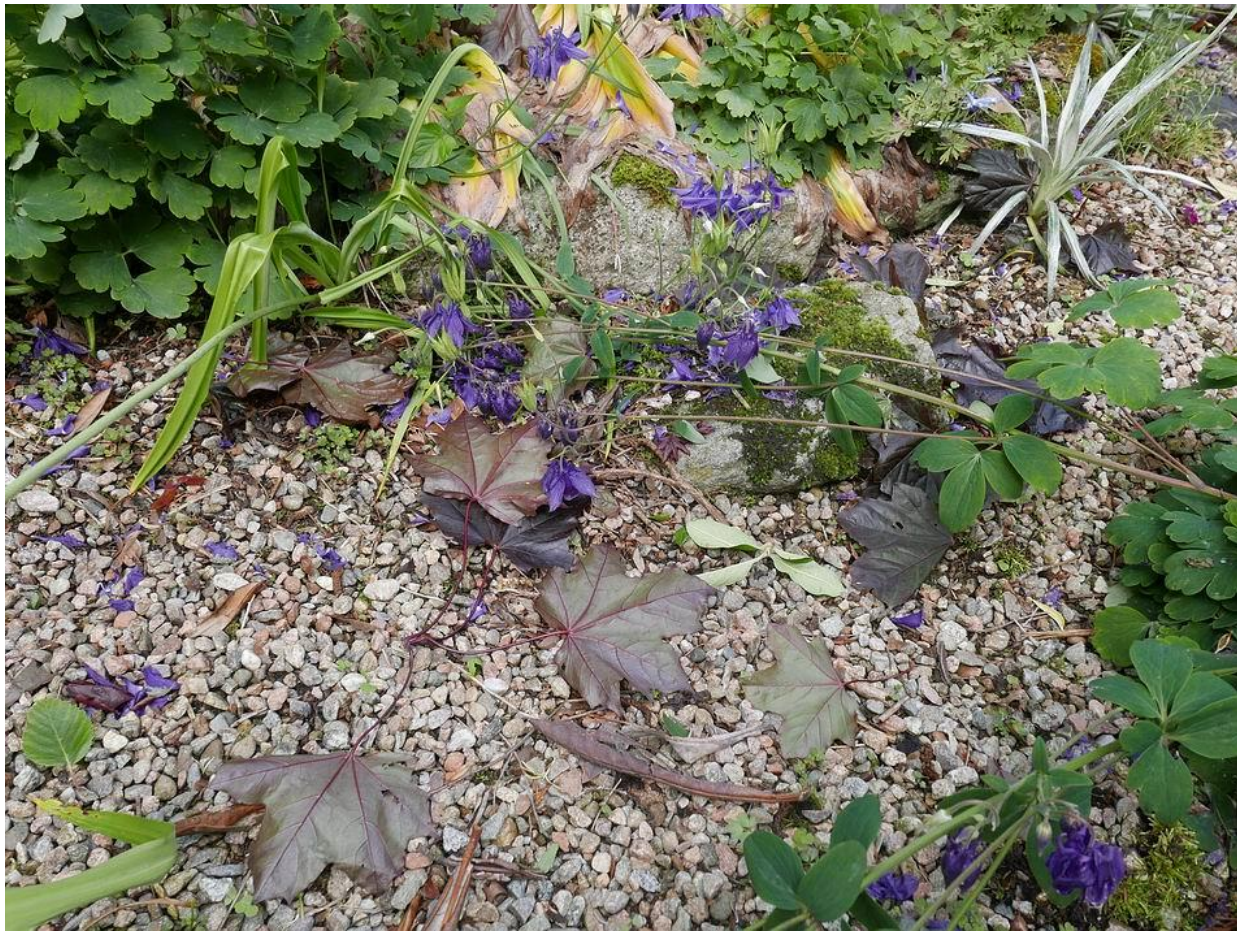
New pond edge bed.





During the week we have had over 24 hours of heavy rain, which was welcome as the ground was very dry, but it was followed by gale force winds which flattened many of the herbaceous plants in the garden: the before and after the wind pictures of the bulb bed, are above and below.





Plants such as Aquilegia were flattened and leaves and branches were ripped from the trees and shrubs long before their time.



Some of the plants in the front garden were partially sheltered from the wind by the trees and shrubs bringing me back to the Aquilegia seen in here. Aquilegia seeds around in the beds where we grow many of the early flowering bulbs, time-sharing the space adding to a succession of seasonal interest. Many variations in the colour and form of the Aquilegia flowers appear as they seed around a selection of which I illustrate below.





Aquilegia flowers

The inclination in *Aquilegia* flowers to mutate seems to be shared by many other members of the Ranunculaceae such as *Hepatica*, *Helleborus* and *Eranthis* to name a few. This variation shows one of the many advantages of raising plants from seed allowing you to observe and enjoy all the different colours and forms.....