



BULB LOG 13.....29th March 2017

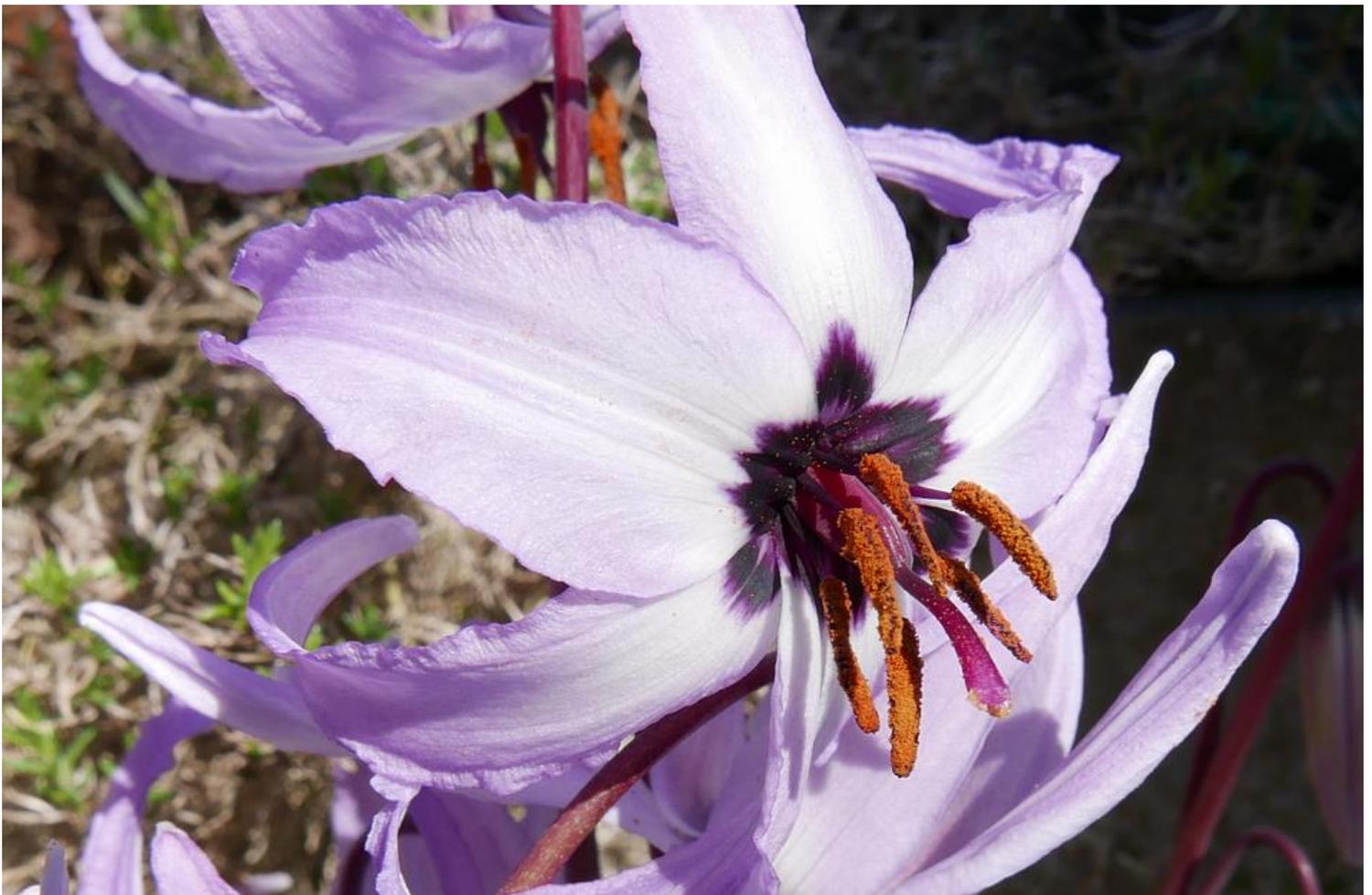




Erythronium hendersonii

Erythronium hendersonii is always among the first of the North American species to come into flower in our garden. Quite often our changeable weather is too cold and wet to allow for successful pollination and fertilisation. However so far we have had a good spell of sunny and unseasonably warm conditions and I have been out with my paint brush pollinating the various groups of seed raised plants that we have. I like to plant out groups of seedlings together; firstly because I prefer the look with the variation of forms rather than a clonal group and secondly to encourage

cross pollination between the different clones and hence the best chance of seed set.

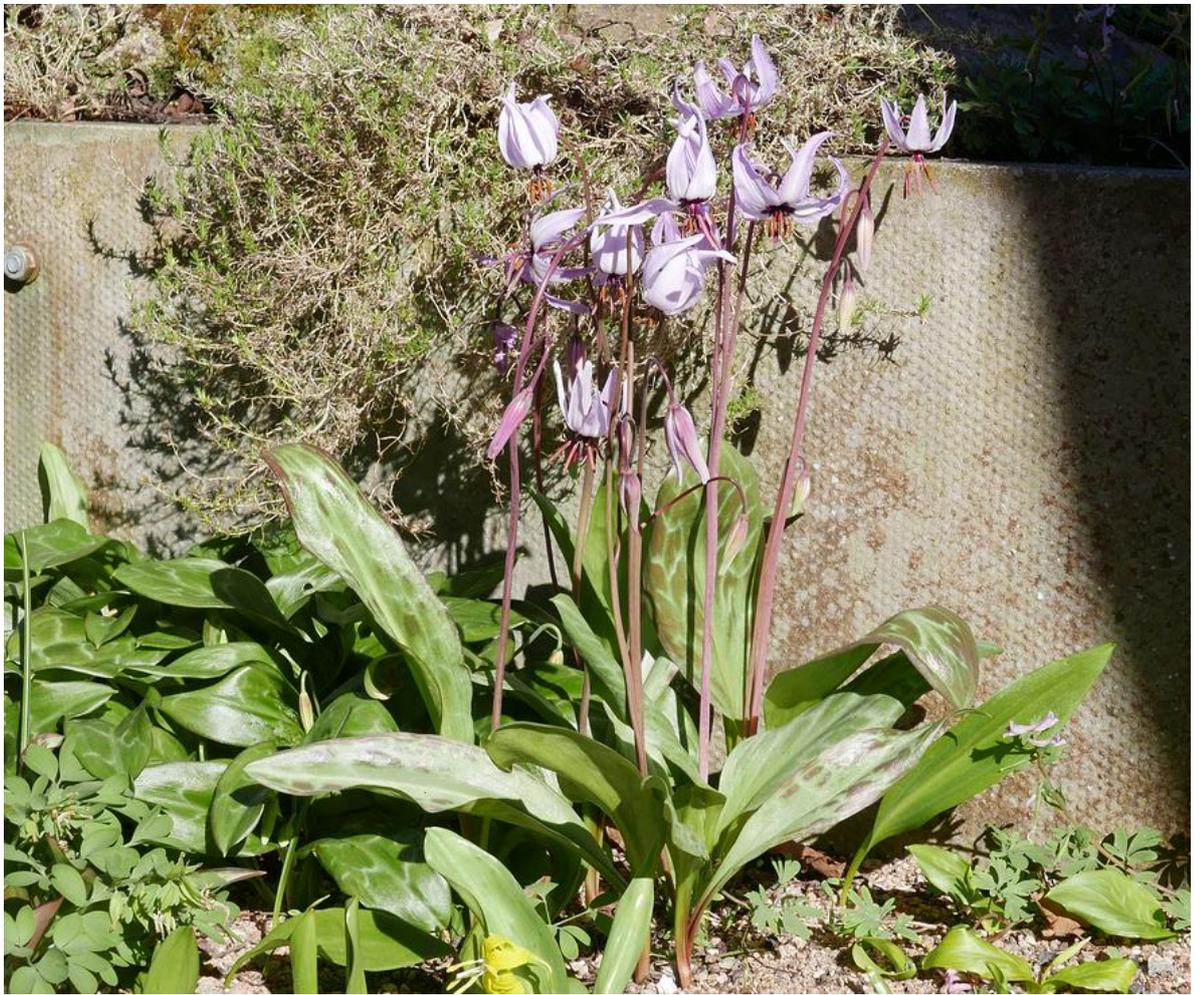


Erythronium hendersonii

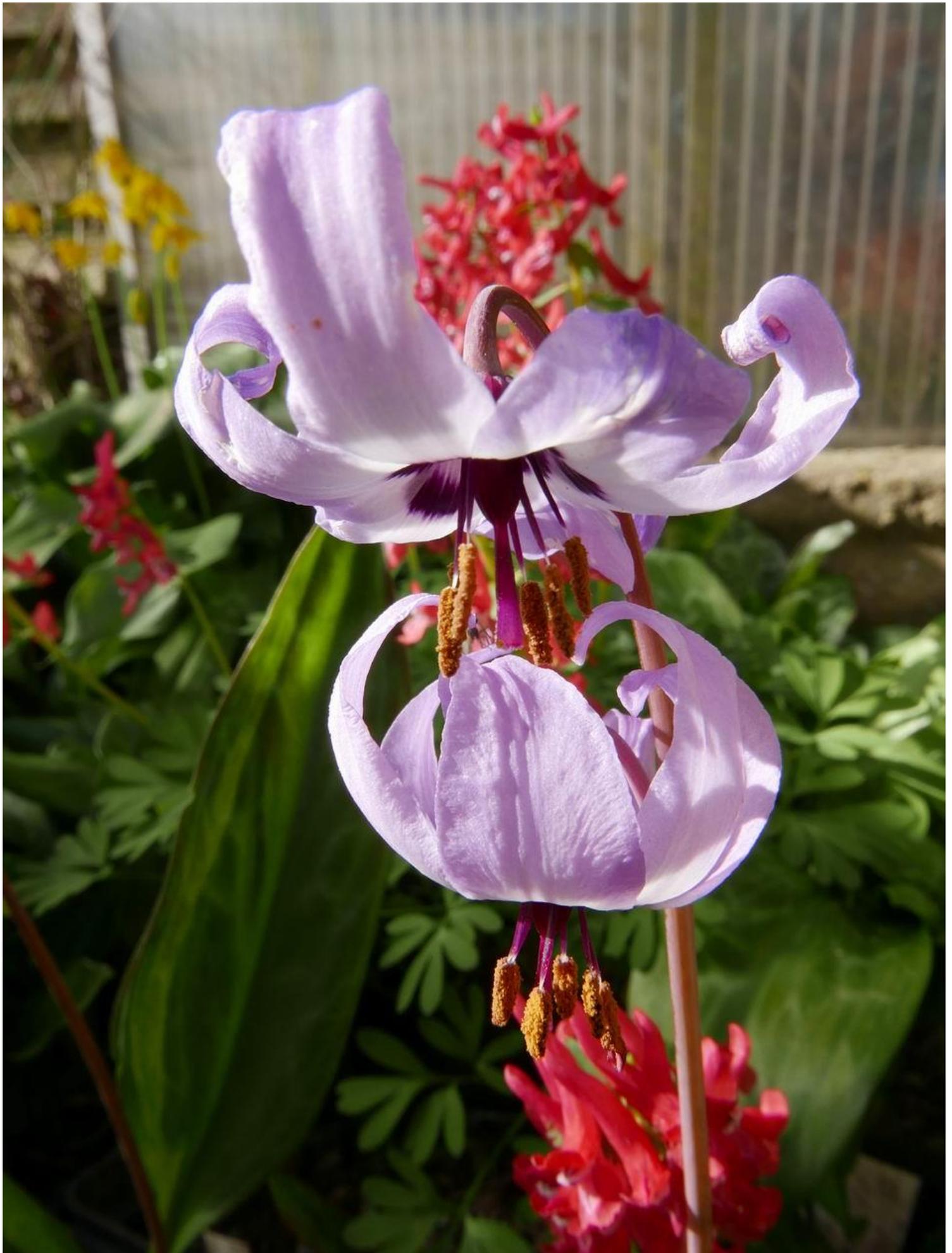
When you look down on a group of their flowers they do not seem so attractive but when you look up or into a flower that changes dramatically when you see the beautiful dark zone contrasting with the colour of the style and pollen which makes this one of the most attractive species.

Erythronium hendersonii

The bulbs of the true species are generally slow to increase so if you want more you will have to raise them from seed. To keep track of my original seedlings, from known wild locations, I grow them in mesh plunge baskets planting out the second and subsequent generations of seedlings into the garden.

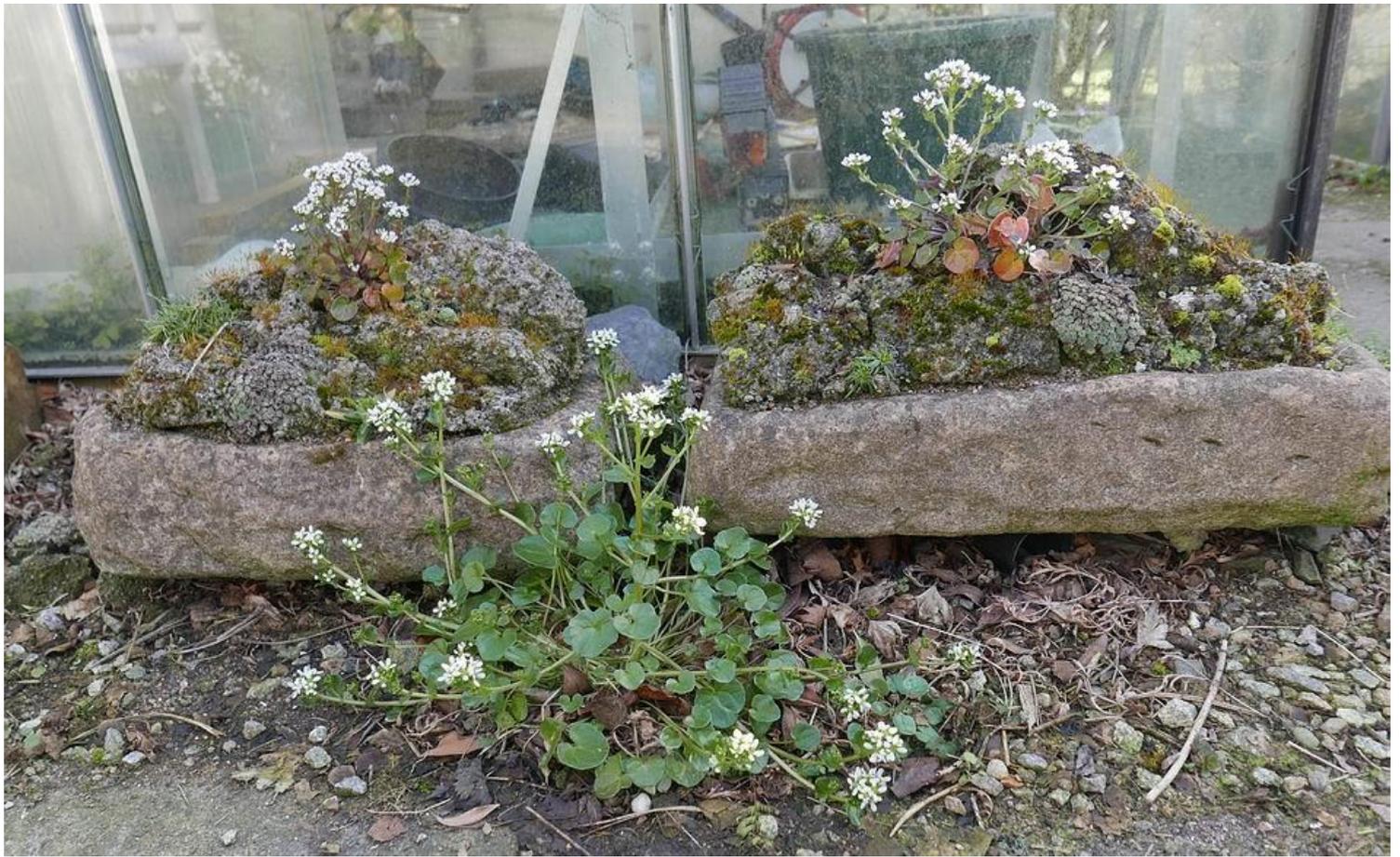


Erythronium hendersonii – this group of seedlings have much paler markings on the leaves.



Erythronium hendersonii

Both the flowers and the gardeners have been enjoying the sunny warm weather of recent days – we never know how long it will last so much so that during such unseasonable warm spells we often joke that is our summer. Sadly some years that can be true as our summers can be cool and wet.



Two fundamentals of my gardening philosophy are firstly to consider the merits of all plants equally, not just selecting the rare and difficult, and secondly to encourage plants to seed around so we have self-sustaining colonies with plants of all ages and not to have only individual mature specimen plants dotted around. A few years ago I collected some seed of *Cochlearia danica* from the seaside cliffs at Aberdeen and scattered them around some of the troughs and slab beds. Now I have a pleasing effect with the plants growing compact in the harder rocky conditions of the trough while the one growing in the gravel covered ground is more robust – this is just how you will observe them growing in nature.

Cochlearia danica is commonly seen growing in the gravel central reservation of roadways, often with pink flowers, where their ability to tolerate salt and hard growing conditions is well suited.

For many this would be considered a weed but in our garden I consider it a wild flower which we can enjoy and easily control its spread by removing the flower stems before the seed is shed if we should desire.



Cochlearia danica



When there is so much colour in the garden it would be easy to miss the more subtle colours, shapes and patterns that are plentiful if only you look. Because we allow and indeed encourage our plants to self-seed all the weeding is done on hands and knees where the rule is you have to identify and confirm the 'weed' before you pull it out. Rather than being a tedious task this gets you down close and looking in detail at even the smallest of seedlings and that is often when I also notice some of these interesting subjects for my camera which I always have with me.



Crocus pelistericus flowers have been open in the sunshine and I have also been pollinating them in the hope of seed later in the year. Click to join me in a short [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#) where I look at the Crocus and *Erythronium hendersonii* in the sunshine.



The last of the Galanthus flowers are still looking good as they pass the baton of being the dominant flower in the beds onto the Corydalis.





Corydalis solida* and *Hepatica nobilis

Corydalis solida and *Hepatica nobilis* are happy and beautiful companions in this small bed between the path and the *Erythronium* plunge where we are encouraging them to seed around making great colour combinations.



Meconopsis have also self-seeded into this narrow bed where they will not compete but form part of the community.

The Meconopsis are only just coming into growth while the Corydalis and Hepatica are in full flower, then they will extend the season of interest bringing colour when the Corydalis have gone underground and the hepatica are in leaf.





Ipheion 'Alberto Castillo' is a great bulb in the garden where it forms clumps and will also seed around.



Tulipa turkestanica grows in the same bed as the Ipheion.



Narcissus minor in the cobble bed.



Paeonia emodii

Many shoots are pushing through the ground with the promise of flowers to come but we should take a while to enjoy their shape form and colour which can be as striking as the flowers.



Jeffersonia dubia



Corydalis malkensis seeds around adding interest to this bed while the *Leucojum* and *Eranthis* have finished flowering and before the *Trillium* and other plants come into growth.



Galanthus leaves are in perfect harmony surrounded by the new growth of *Corydalis* of various types.



Plants rarely grow in isolation in the wild they are far more likely to group together forming mutually supporting communities and here in the narrow gravel area between the front path and the bed *Cyclamen hederifolium* have seeded and are growing happily through a similarly seeded mossy Saxifrage.



Erythronium seeds have fallen through the saxifrage matt and are now in their second/third year of growth showing that they are very happy to grow this way.



Gardens are full of individual habitats that I am keen to exploit by allowing plants to behave in a more natural way than they are allowed to do in many gardens. The area of raised wall under the pine is a pet project where my main intervention is to help scatter the seed, mainly of *Trillium rivale* down the face of the wall.



The main grouping of *Trillium rivale* seedlings can just be seen on the top of the wall and will feature once more in the Bulb Log when it comes into flower but now I also have seedlings from just germinating to now flowering in the gaps between the rocks.

Also imitating scenes I have seen in nature I introduced a few *Galanthus nivalis* into the wall.

I push the falling pine needles into the gaps between the rocks to help build up a growing medium - it also adds to the natural look that I am trying to imitate in this habitat.



I have found the best way to plant up a vertical wall is by encouraging seeds to fall into the cracks. *Erythroniums* growing on the top of this raised bed have seeded down into the gravel but some have fallen into the cracks between the rocks which will result in a very naturalistic planting of *Erythroniums* flowering in the bed, in the wall as well as in the gravel below.



Erythronium seeded into the wall.



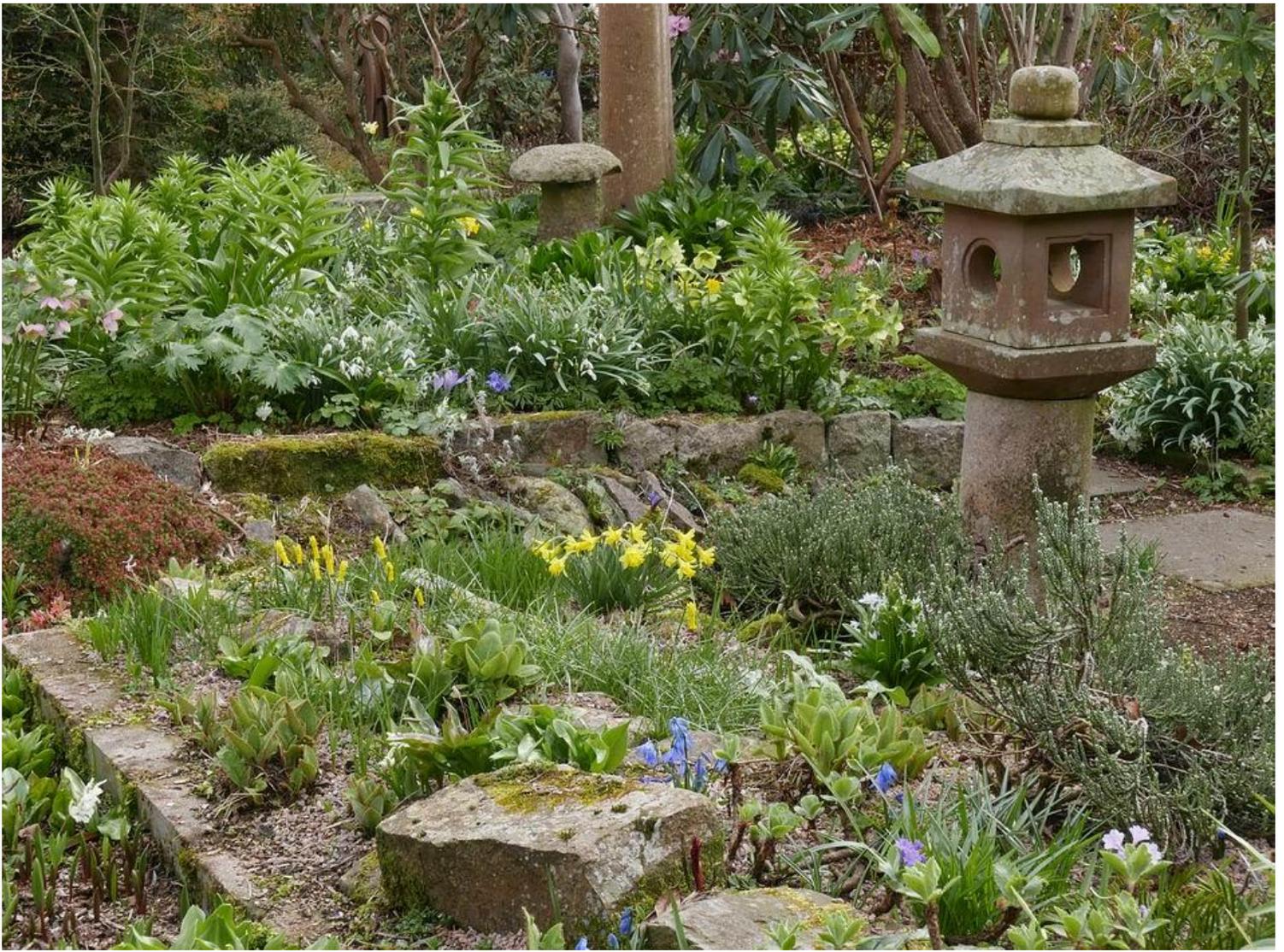
All the plants growing to the front of the line of rocks, which is the edge of the original bed, have self-seeded, sometimes with my help, into the gravel.



Narcissus bulbocodium and **Corydalis solida** are among the many plants we encourage to seed into the gravel and grow in a naturalistic way where there is a mix from newly germinating seedlings to clumps forming as the more mature bulbs divide.



The view looking across some of the *Erythronium* plunges, the rock garden to the right and the bulb bed beyond.



Zooming in on a section of the rock garden and bulb bed.



A hybrid of *Erythronium oregonum*, growing here with *Cyclamen hederifolium* leaves, flowers well before the main flowering of the *Erythronium*s.



Having many different seed raised forms of a species will not only give you variation in the flower colour but will also give you a longer flowering season because different seedlings flower at different times, the flower on our earliest forms of **Erythronium dens-canis** are fading while these are in their prime others have yet to appear.

The often repeated "tip" that you should remove flowers as they go over to prevent the bulbs setting seed, stating that it will weaken the bulb, is ridiculous.

Bulbs have evolved to set seed and bulbs that are setting seed will grow on longer than those with no seed and that extra period of growth will more than make up for any extra energy required - in addition seed is the most valuable crop you can take from your bulbs.



Erythronium dens-canis



Erythronium dens-canis

There are several named forms of white *Erythronium dens-canis* available in the trade and over the years we have raised a number from our own seedlings – we now have a range from the very darkest of reds through shades of pink to white.

Click to see a [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#) with *Corydalis*, *Erythronium* and more.....