



BULB LOG 44.....1st November 2017



This week's cover picture shows **Eucomis bicolor** stems still holding some colour and the promising looking seed capsules which experience tells me are a likely to be a false promise as we have not had any viable seed set so far in our garden. I was attracted by the colourful stems baring all the scars of the season and thought that they would make an interesting cover picture. I never look back at previous year's Bulb Logs before I write the current week's



diary and it was only while I was referring back through my files looking for pictures for a talk that I discovered I had used the same plant and a very similar image on the cover of Bulb Log 4516.

Now the days are shortening and the frosts have started this plant will soon retreat underground until next summer.

One question I keep asking myself is, what is gardening? I have come to the conclusion that there are almost as many definitions and styles as there are gardeners. Your garden is what you want it to be and even what you want from your garden will change over the years. I increasingly see myself as a habitat manipulator where I try and recreate (mimic) what I

observe and enjoy in the wild - I am going more native all the time. Taking a few steps from our front door I find a scene that reminds me of being in an autumn woodland with the fallen leaves mixing with the understory of woodland plants and the stems of Rhododendron, Acer and Pinus.



The leaves will decompose adding an annual mulch of humus to the soil.



A few metres away I am in another habitat where the now shredded cuttings from the cloud pruned tree I worked on last week are piled around its base to compost for a few months before being spread out as a mulch.



The autumn colours provided by the Acers and other trees continues but soon all the leaves will fall leaving the trees bare when, without their canopy, the garden takes on a different, more open character.



Acer leaves





Colourful companions

Earlier in the year, when my pet Dandelion (***Taraxicum officinalis***) had finished flowering, I cut all its leaves down to the ground now it has not only regrown another set of leaves but is also providing another succession of flowers. In addition to providing colour these flowers are a welcome food source to a steady stream of bees.





Taraxicum officinalis with pollinator.



The same plant on the 14th May this year before being cut down to the ground.



Primula vulgaris, the common primrose also obliges with an out of season flower.



View towards the bulb houses

The growth of new leaves continues apace in the bulb houses and will require careful attention to the watering.

These Sternbergia leaves are now fully developed and I will adjust their watering accordingly. When the leaves were actively growing they required plenty water and nutrients to fuel the growth now they are fully formed it is a case of providing them with sufficient water to stay hydrated and healthy.



Unlike in a pot of a single genus/species leaf growth in this sand bed is at varying stages of growth – some, like the Sternbergia and the earliest of the Narcissus, now have fully extended leaves while others have yet to show above the sand. My aim with watering is to allow the top layer of sand to dry but make sure that the

lower layers, where the roots are probing, always remains moist. I cannot tell you how often you need to water because that is dependent on a number of factors such as the temperature, humidity, the depth of sand, the amount of plants actively using the water so you need to observe your plants and gain experience in recognising when water should be added. I am watering every 7 to 10 days at the moment but the frequency between watering will extend as the temperatures fall.



The plunges are made of sections that are 600 x 600mm and the sand is 150mm deep - as a rule of thumb I water with 5litres of water per section. I can always add extra water directly around plants that I think may need more.



Watering flattens the sand which if left will form a crust so once the water has had time to drain through the sand I rake the surface back into a crumb. Above left is the raked surface while I have still to rake the sand on the right.



The first **Narcissus cantabricus foliosus** flowers are opening and it is exactly at this time that any seed sown before the first storm at the beginning of September will also be germinating and indeed as I was raking the sand surface I dislodged a recently germinated seed.



Narcissus seed germinating.



Crocus longiflorus flowers are not only beautiful when they are in prime condition but they develop a different form of beauty as they start to wither (below).



Crocus longiflorus



***Crocus pulchellus*, *Crocus wattiorum*, *Crocus laevigatus* and *Sedum yosemitense*.**





Crocus laevigatus





Crocus longiflorus
growing in a 7cm
pot.



A nice form of **Crocus serotinus** raised from collected seed.



Many years ago we received a few corms of **Crocus ochroleucus albus** from Brian Mathew ex Valerie Finnis.





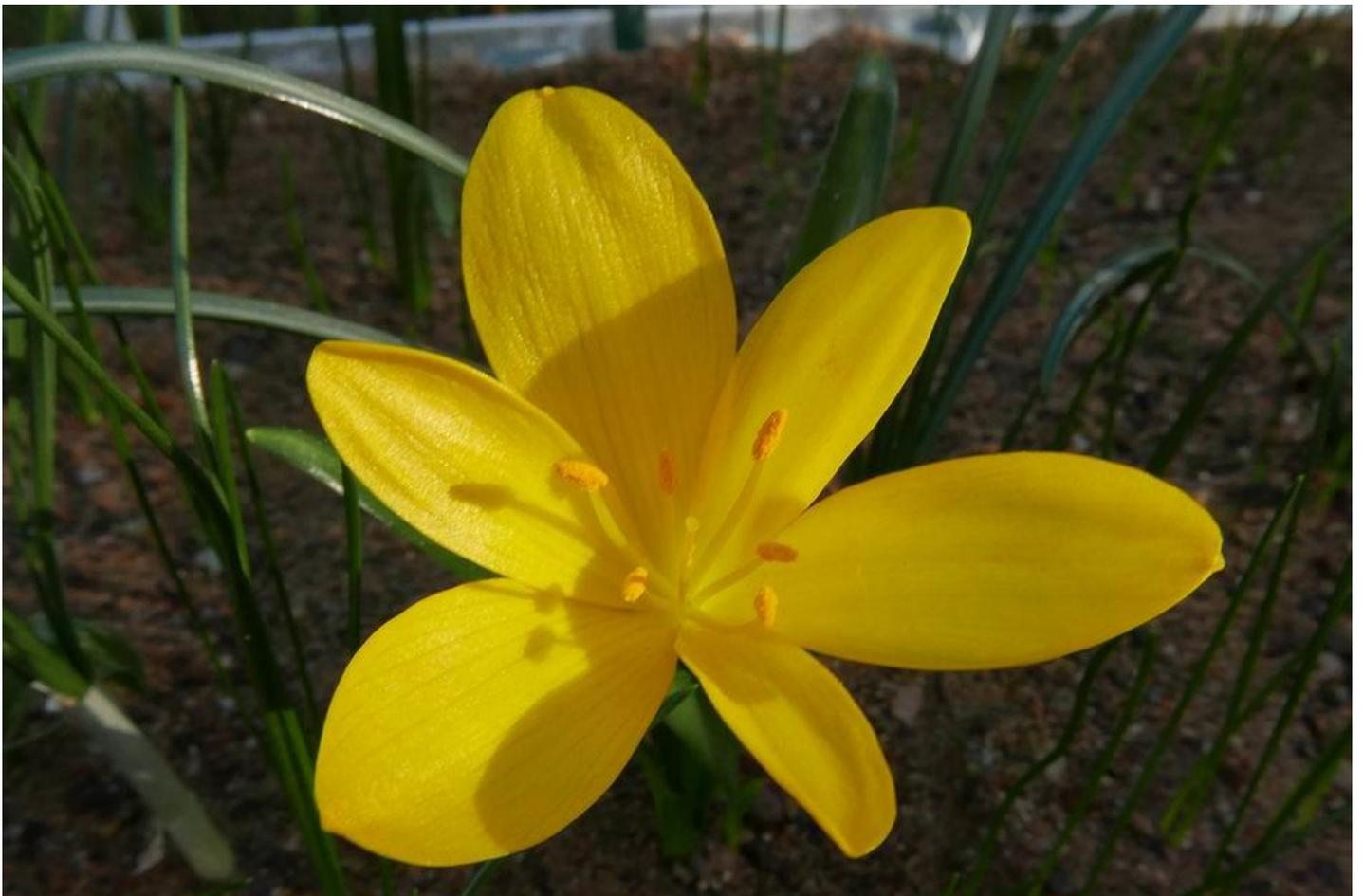
Crocus caspius



Some of the bulbs flowering in the latest of the sand beds that I converted this summer – it is fun seeing what appears because I have no recollection of many of the bulbs I put in nor where exactly I put them.



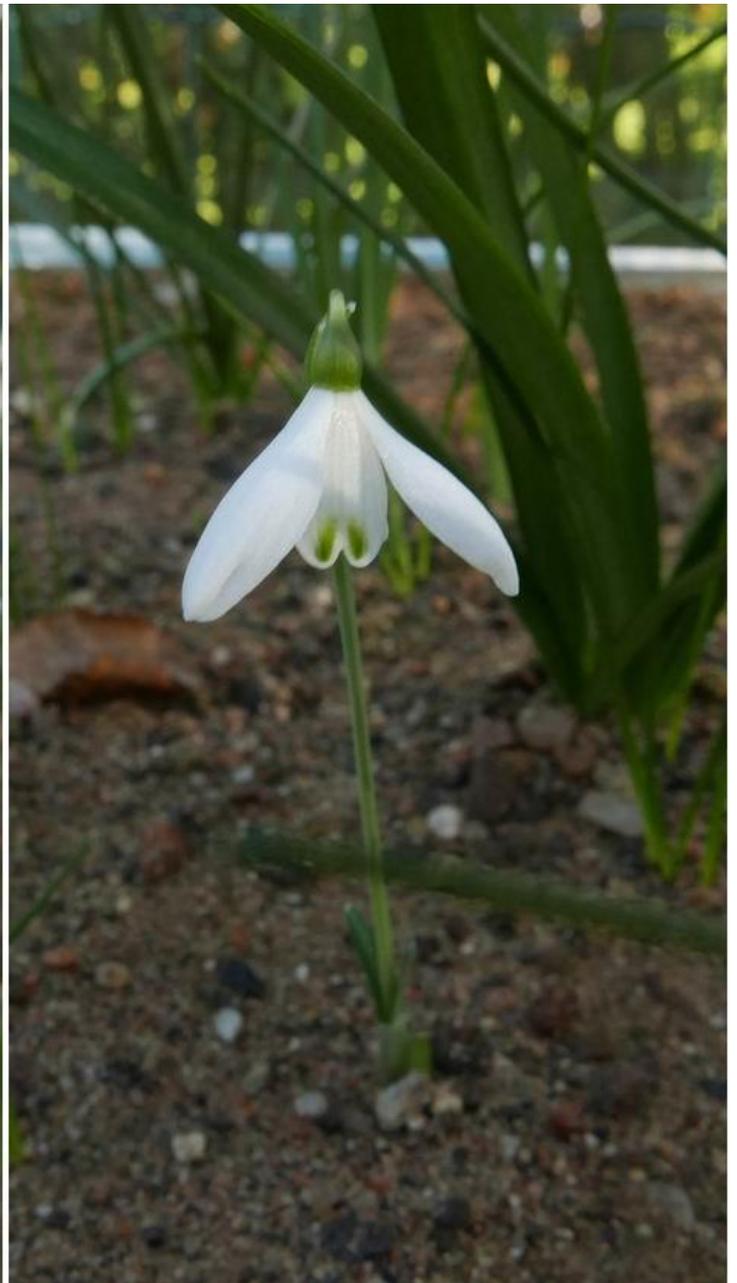
I always allow the surface of the sand to dry before I water again – I watered this bed after taking the pictures. On wet days when humidity is high the surface of the sand will appear wet so I only ever decide on nice dry days if I need to water or not.



Sternbergia lutea



As well as the **Crocus laevigatus** two forms of **Galanthus reginae olgae** flowering can also be seen flowering in this picture, the one on the left is significantly taller than the other and there is also a variation in the shape of the flowers see below.



Galanthus reginae olgae



Final image for this week is of **Crocus ochroleucus albus**.

If you have not seen it already click the link to view the [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#) I made last week which includes the sand beds.....