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Bulb Log Diary

ISSN 2514-6114

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BULB LOG 47.....21st November 2018





The recent mild conditions have resulted in many of the Narcissus growing in the sand beds to open their flowers. Most of the early flowering Narcissus tend to have white or creamy white flowers so I am very pleased to have the yellow flowering Narcissus seedling, shown on the front cover, flowering now to provide a colour contrast.

With no labels in the sand beds I need to try and identify what they may be. This task is made more difficult because

many of these bulbs have grown from open pollinated seedlings which because of the promiscuity within the bulbocodium section results in many hybrids.





This plant has been assigned to **Narcissus cantabricus var foliosus** but in Michael Salmon's book 'A Survey of the Genus Narcissus' he categorises it as **Narcissus albidus ssp. foliosus**. I have always been puzzled that this plant was a form of *Narcissus cantabricus* so I do have some sympathies with Salmon's alternate opinion.

It is very easy when plants are in pots just to read the label and never really learn to identify them. However I have trained myself to observe them very carefully paying especial attention to key diagnostic features, such as the short pedicel of this plant, to be reminded of the name plants. It is however also very handy to have a reference collection in pots with labels, like these, to be able to do a direct comparison.





Both of the Narcissus photographed on this page are also seedlings that I believe are hybrids - the one above is white and the one on the left is a creamy off white.



Unusual Narcissus flower.

Oddities, like this Narcissus seedling, will often appear in plants and seedlings. Sometimes it is damage in the bud that causes mutation, which in this case is preventing the corona from opening out in a normal fashion but sometimes it is a genetic mutation that will be passed to all vegetatively propagated offspring. If this does turn out to be a genetically fixed mutation I am not convinced that it is a desirable one.



**Narcissus
'Craigton
Chorister'**

Opening around a month earlier than last year these flowers are on one of the seedlings that I selected out as being very attractive and named Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister'.



Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister'

Another white Narcissus seedling that has increased by division to form three bulbs has some similarities to *Narcissus albidus* ssp. *foliosus* but I suspect that it is a hybrid.



Crocus niveus



Crocus laevigatus and *Crocus caspius* flowering among a small forest of *Narcissus* leaves and stems.



There are plenty more *Narcissus* buds coming through the sand to keep us in flowers all the way through to the end of next spring.



Many of the autumn leaves have fallen however the two Acer japonicum seedlings nearest the house have only recently coloured up to create a heart-warming yellow glow outside our sitting room window. As we share the garden with the birds it is appropriate that we should also share our home with bird carvings.



The many trees and shrubs in the garden provide a welcoming habitat providing food and shelter for the birds, there is a wood pigeon nest in this tree and there are always plenty of small birds foraging among the branches.



At a time when so many plants are retreating underground I take pleasure the leaves that stay green such as these Helleborus and ferns.

Not all plants lose their leaves in the run up to winter – some *Corydalis* such as **Corydalis ‘Craigton Purple’** have evolved to take advantage of the cool moist conditions of late summer /autumn to produce their new leaves

In [Bulb Log 3318](#)

I was splitting *Corydalis* ‘Craigton Purple’ and potted up some of the smallest offsets placing four into each of these 7cm pots.





Now three months on the growth has filled the pots.



I selected Corydalis 'Craigton Purple' as the best from a number of seedlings; here is a sister plant growing happily.



Corydalis 'Craigton Blue' is related to and I suspect a parent of 'Craigton Purple' - its leaves are also well into growth and will remain green throughout the winter.



Here the leaves of two very different plants show similarities, **Corydalis chaerophylla** along with a naturalised fern.



The fronds of many ferns stay green providing decoration and valuable habitat for the garden wildlife through the winter months.



I will cut these fronds back in late winter to encourage the new growth. Here also the leaves of an Epimedium.



I do not find some of the larger Epimediums to be the best companion plants to associate with the bulbs. They are fine planted in among bigger shrubs but their woody rhizomes(left) will spread out just below the surface forming such a dense mat that bulbs growing below cannot push through.

There are however many other less invasive Epimediums that will make excellent companions - one is the small leaved deciduous **Epimedium grandiflorum** in autumn colour below.





Molly works with me in the garden and is standing beside the trough planted up with Ramonda which also retain their leaves through the winter.



Asplenium trichomanes, *Ramonda* and *Hepatica* will all keep their leaves through the winter.



Asplenium scolopendrium ferns have seeded into the tufa along with *Cyclamen hederifolium* and *Saxifraga*



The specific name of *Cyclamen hederifolium* refers to the similarity in shape of their leaves (bottom row) to those of the common Ivy, *Hedera helix* (above).



It seems that this year's warm weather has perfectly suited *Hedera helix* as I cannot remember seeing such a mass flowering before as I am witnessing here. These flowers and the berries that follow are very valuable sources of food for the garden pollinating insects and birds.

Your ivy will only flower if it is allowed to reach the top of a support. Once it has achieved that flowering stems are produced on which the shape leaf will change and flowers form.



Hedera helix flowers and berries starting to form



Ivy can be invasive and left to its own devices it can smother other plants so I do ensure that it is only allowed to grow where I want it. As well as producing a winter food source I grow it is because it provides a valuable habitat for garden wildlife. This is our southern wall on top of which we have a lattice fence for privacy and over the years



I have stacked tree prunings that were too big to put through my shredder against it again to provide habitat. The ivy is allowed to grow up and through the stacked trunks and branches - this further increases the shelter for the smaller birds with robins, wrens and blackbirds all choosing to build nests there.



Birds nest



There are a number of dwarf forms of *Hedera helix* available that are suitable for the rock garden or troughs –we have grown this form which has tiny leaves and congested growth for over thirty years.



I will finish off this week with another beautiful white flowered Narcissus seedling.....