



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 48.....27th November 2019



Narcissus



The first of the hoop petticoat Narcissus is now in flower, it is one of our own seedlings which will involve *Narcissus albidus*, *cantabricus* and *romieuxii*, but this year it is a lonely pair of flowers blooming well ahead of the rest of them. Checking back through the Bulb Logs I can see when the flowering started in previous years and compared to most years this is going to be a late year.



There are plenty of buds appearing but depending on the weather conditions the flowers may not open until early next year.

This time last year, as in most years, we had many in flower, the only similar later flowering year in recent times was 2016.

Exactly what triggers the stem to elongate, pushing the fully formed flower up from the protection of the bulb where it has rested since spring to finally flower, has fascinated and puzzled me. While I can narrow down the reasons it is difficult to state precisely what spurs them into flower.

I know some growers hold back the first watering to try and delay

the flowering but I always start watering at the beginning of September; that is constant, so what are the variables? These variables include when the plant went dormant in the spring and the temperature variations during the summer. I do not think it is a single vector that triggers the growth but a sequence of events relating to summer temperatures followed by the sudden drop in temperature during autumn often caused by and associated with the first rains of the season.



Compare this sand bed today with how it looked in [Bulb Log 4818](#) and you can see the difference in flowering time of these Narcissus while most of the outside garden was at pretty much the same stage. I approach all gardening as an ongoing experiment that presents me with challenges and switching from growing some of the bulbs in pots to planting them directly in sand was one of the new challenges I set myself. This bed was planted in 2014 and the majority of bulbs have grown very well so well in fact that some have increased in numbers to the extent that they are now becoming too congested so this summer I dug out the left hand leg of this U-shaped plunge replanting only around one third of the bulbs removed.



Now I will be able to compare directly the difference in growth and flowering between the untouched congested right hand side, above, with the replanted left hand side shown below.



Left hand side



One of the challenges I am facing is to work out why *Scilla lingulata* which are growing in the sand are not flowering very well.



Moving to another bulb house where we converted all the plunges over to sand beds there are still a number of Crocus in flower.



Here again I am learning how the bulbs can adapt to growing in this habitat - while many grow well there are some that have not flourished and a few that have died out completely so I need to learn if there is anything that I can do differently to help those. With pots I can water the pots individually and so adjust or target the watering regime to suit the species but that is not so easy in the sand – I can add additional water around those that like it moist but it is more difficult to make adjustments for those that like to be kept that bit drier.



Crocus goulimyi 'Sofia Agia' MJ9562



Crocus in sand plunge bed.



Galanthus reginae olgae



Sternbergia lutea



Among the plants having problems in this shared habitat are some *Cyclamen mirabile*, when no leaves or flowers appeared I poked about and found the corm looked fine but all the growth points seemed to have rotted off - a second plant, shown below, does have some growth but again most of the growth branches have succumbed.



I don't know if they will grow new branches and recover or if I have lost them.



Among the species growing very well in the sand are **Crocus ligusticus** whose corms are forming clumps and will soon need dividing.



Similarly **Crocus ochroleucus albus** is increasing nicely.



Mixed Crocus flowering in the sand beds.





To prevent rot from getting a hold in the damp days of winter I tug off the spent flowers as they collapse.



By this time we have enjoyed their beauty plus they have had plenty of time for the pollen to grow to fertilise the seed if they have been successfully pollinated.



Crocus longiflorus



Crocus longiflorus is among those species that have three relatively long bright orange stigma branches.



The stigma branches of *Crocus pallasii* 'Homeri' are even longer.



Crocus pallasii 'Homeri'



The longest of all stigma branches are found on the saffron crocus - **Crocus sativus** must be the oldest clone as it has been in cultivation for at least hundreds of years.

There are records showing that saffron has been valued and collected for over three thousand years but no one has any record of this form, *Crocus sativus*, growing in the wild. It is speculated that due to the value placed on saffron forms of *Crocus cartwrightianus* possessing the longest stigma branches have been selected over the millennia until they ended up with this triploid clone. I cannot grow it to flower successfully but like many attending the SRGC Discussion Weekend in October I was given a bag of corms



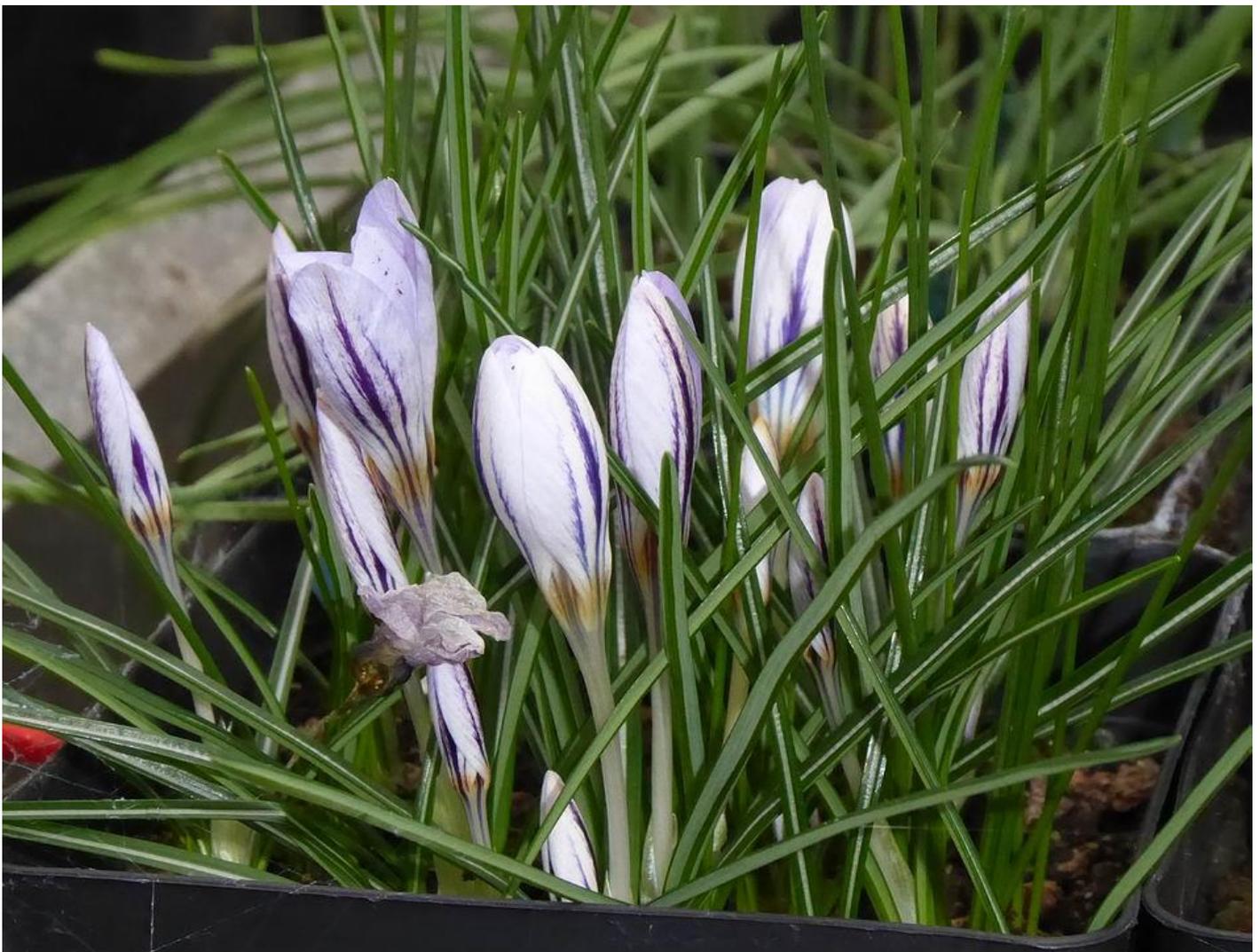
by [Jacques Amand](#) which has resulted in these pots of flowers. As I have no chance of getting them back into flower in our garden I will simply discard the corms when the flowering is over.



The flowers of the pot grown Narcissus bulbs are also slow to emerge this year although again there are plenty of buds showing.



Narcissus flower buds.



Crocus laevigatus

The variation in the flowering time I see in the narcissus does not tend to be replicated in other genera most of the crocuses flower around the same time every year.



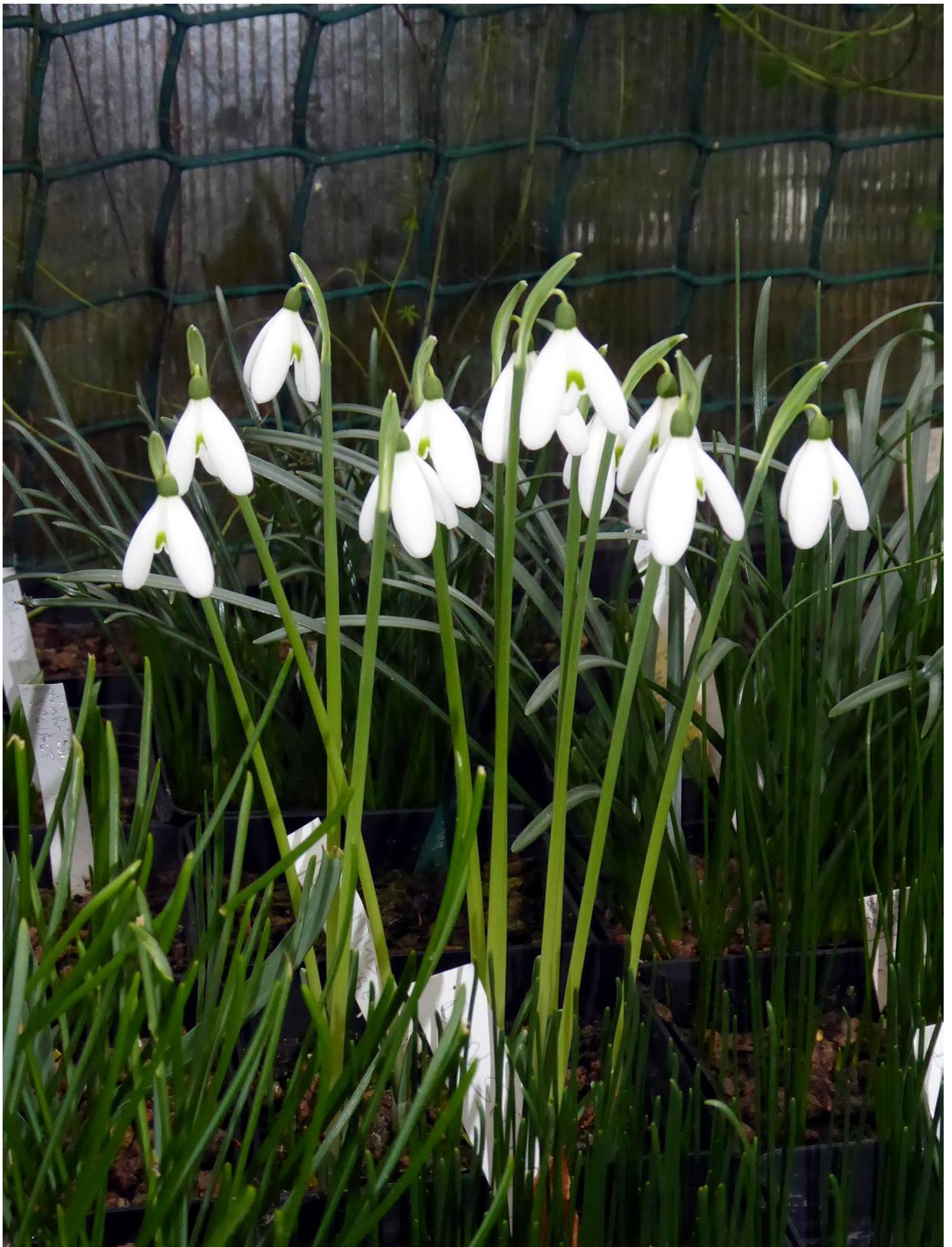
The nice fat buds of ***Galanthus*** 'E. A. Bowles' are also poking through the compost.



View of one of the benches of pots.



It is important to keep watering the bulbs through the winter so they do not dry out; however do not water if freezing conditions are forecast.



Galanthus reginae olgae

I will round off this week with another larger form of *Galanthus reginae olgae*.....