



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 43.....23rd October 2019

Autumn chaos



I have always been amused or more correctly frustrated that most of the gardening programs on the UK television shut down in the autumn and don't return until spring approaches. In a diverse garden there is so much to see and do throughout the autumn and winter months – gardening is a year round activity way of life. The autumn leaf fall along with the collapsing growths of the herbaceous plants, as they retreat underground, bring a chaotic untidy look to the garden that I enjoy.

When I start a drawing or painting I will make some kind of mess on the blank sheet- a starting point from which I can create the image - this is what happens in the

garden - every autumn brings a mess of discarded leaves and other plant material that I work on through the winter to bring some kind of order. The trees and shrubs provide a strong year round structure to our garden below which I can paint the ground with a succession of seasonal flowering plants including the bulbs. Many of the trees are Acers such as the **Acer palmatum dissectum** shown above which has been growing in a pot for all of its thirty plus years as has the *Acer japonicum* 'Aconitifolium' below.



Acer japonicum 'Aconitifolium'

Look carefully at this picture and you will see some ripe seeds hanging and ready to be sown- this container grown plant may have been restricted in its growth but it is the seed parent of a number of the larger acer trees growing around the garden.



The trees on the right are both seedlings raised from that *Acer japonicum* 'Aconitifolium' and are now substantial trees in the garden – interestingly they hold on to their leaves well into November or until the freezing weather arrives. Also seen is *Acer platanoides* 'Crimson King' a purple leaved variant of the Norway maple tree which is



perhaps not one I would recommend for the smaller garden as it is quite vigorous and has large leaves. One of the many tasks that I will be tackling in the coming months is reducing the canopies of the trees to keep the natural shape of the tree but allowing light and moisture through to the ground level plantings. On the left is one of the many self-sown acer seedlings that I find. In the garden I have to decide which if any we can allow to grow on to maturity.



During this season we find Acer leaves both above our heads and below our feet as they fall to the ground. Clearing the leaves is another of the many autumn/winter tasks to be undertaken.



I will clear the leaves from the paths and off the evergreen plants which could be damaged if they lay buried under leaves all winter. With the exception of *Acer platanoides* 'Crimson King' all the trees we grow have small leaves so in the woodland type beds I leave them where they fall to break down naturally, recycling such nutrients back into the ground adding to the woody soil.



A welcome sign of autumn is the appearance of the fungi which indicate to me that we have a healthy organic soil where the leaves will be broken down and the nutrients turned into compounds that can be taken up by the plants.



Sorbus leaves and the berries containing the possibility of future generations in the form of the seeds.



The leaves on *Paeonia lutea* var *ludlowii* are also turning colour, performing one more display before they drop.



On closer inspection you will also see the *Paeonia lutea* var *ludlowii* seed pods opening to reveal the large seeds which have in previous years been allowed to scatter naturally resulting in a number seedlings growing around the garden.

If we allowed all the self-sown ***Paeonia lutea* var *ludlowii*** seedlings to grow to maturity we would disappear into a tree peony jungle so we have to remove the majority of the seedlings. Fortunately even after a number of years' growth they are easy to remove from our woody type of soil for transplanting or giving away.





Allium wallichii stems hold aloft the ripening seed heads and once more this growing colony was started many years ago when I planted out one pot of seedlings. The many, now mostly empty, Erythronium seed capsules can also be seen in this picture indicating yet another self-regenerating colony of plants that I am happy to allow to spread across the garden.



Back among the fallen leaves of autumn I can see many other self-seeding plants that are perhaps less welcome and I need to exercise some degree of control over so many of these will be weeded out over the winter months.

All our weeding is done by hand with the rule that you have to identify what it is that you are about to pull out before taking the decisions if it is allowed to stay or has to go.



Autumn coloured leaves are above and below our heads.





These beautifully coloured of **Lonicera nitida** berries have formed on a bush that was itself a seedling self-sown from part of our boundary hedge that after a few years I lifted and planted into a bonsai container.



Bonsai Lonicera nitida



The pond is still colourful with the leaves of the acers and the willows turning yellow as they prepare to drop.



Salix lanata



The Pond has, much like the rest of our garden has been influenced by our appreciation of Japanese styles.



Through the winter the chaos of autumn will be worked on to prepare the garden for a fresh start in the spring.



After turning yellow in the autumn the leaves of **Disporum smithii** disintegrate eventually leaving a skeletal image.



More autumn chaos on the ground while some trees stubbornly hold on to their leaves.



The autumn leaves have to be removed from the raised beds and troughs where the alpines are growing.

Colchicum
flowers among
the colourful
autumn carpet.



For a while, when around half of the leaves have dropped, we are surrounded by a wonderful warm glow from the carpet of colour below our feet as well as from the leaves still hanging on above our heads.



**Cyclamen
hederifolium**



This is another acer I raised from seed, I forget the species, it has a mass of seeds coloured to match the autumnal leaves which are tempting me to grow even more trees from seed.



The colourful autumnal spectacle we enjoy is provided by the deciduous seasonal players while the evergreens are here as the name suggests, providing interest for the gardener and shelter for the wildlife all year round.

If you are in the area I am speaking at the Hampshire Alpine Garden Society – Annual Open Meeting on Thursday, October 24th 2019 - 7.00 for 7.30 Chilworth Hall, Chilworth Rd, Chilworth, Southampton SO16 7LD.