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Bulb Log Diary

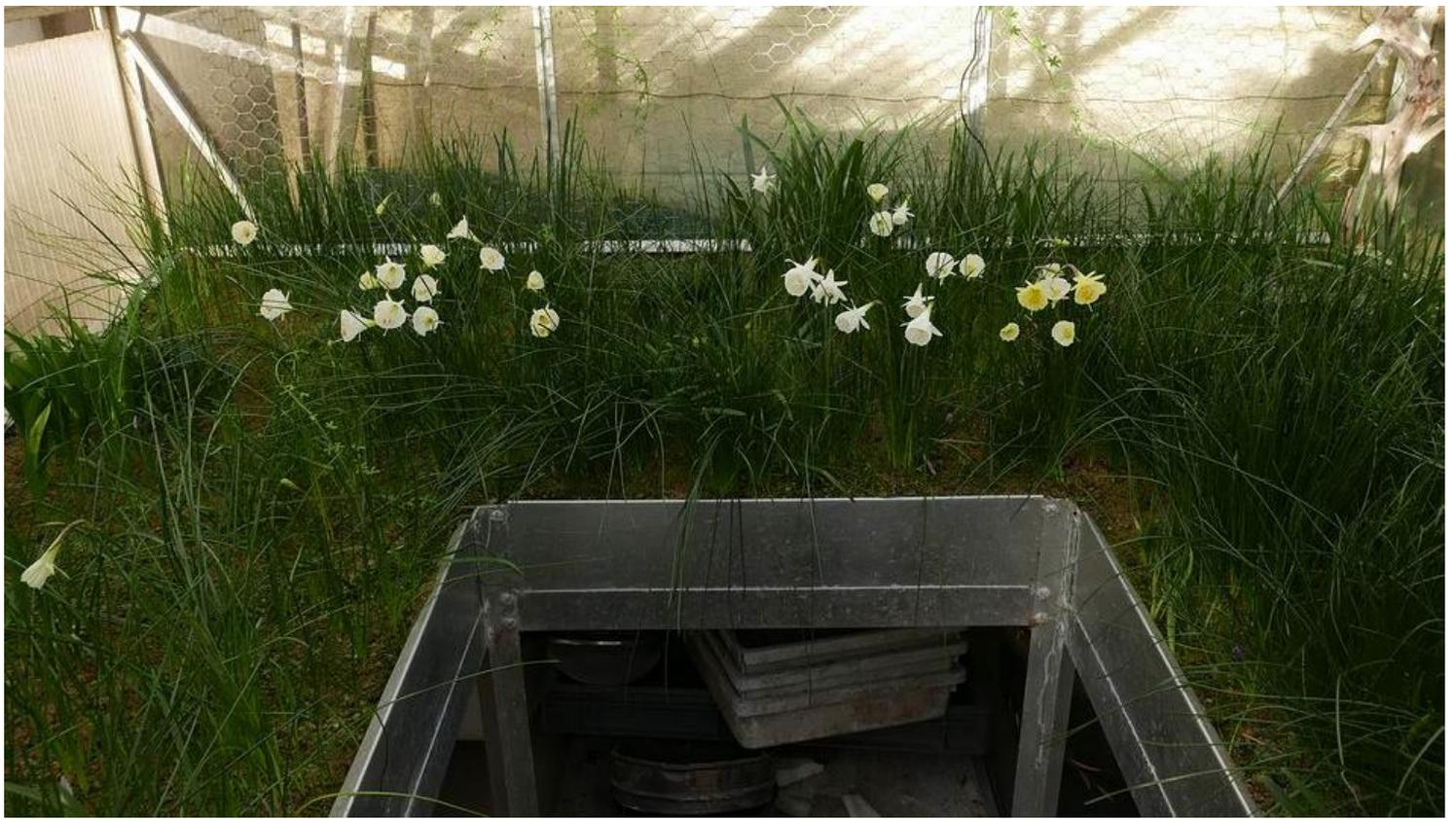
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BULB LOG 01.....1st January 2020



Narcissus



The temperatures were unseasonably mild during the last week of 2019 which has resulted in a number of hoop petticoat Narcissus opening their flowers, giving us a colourful start to 2020. The cover picture shows what I most enjoy, that is a mixed group of different coloured hybrids involving a number of species such as *Narcissus albidus*, *bulbocodium*, *cantabricus*, *romieuxii* etc. This year is one of the latest starts to the Narcissus season I can remember causing us to wait longer for this winter flowering spectacle to get going but now that it has started we will have flowers all the way through to May, or depending on the temperatures, even into June.





There are many naturally occurring *Narcissus* hybrids in the section *Bulbocodium* wherever they grow geographically close enough to be cross pollinated and this promiscuity is certainly the case when so many are growing in a small bulb house when each batch of seedlings brings new treasures.







I converted this 60x60cm section of one of the benches into another sand bed to accommodate some of the surplus bulbs I had when I thinned out one of the original sand bed plantings.



Narcissus ‘Craigton Chorister’

Our very first Narcissus ‘Craigton Chorister’ flower of this season has just opened, some four weeks later than the average flowering time. This is one of a number of Narcissus cultivars that I have raised, named and distributed. I always use ‘Craigton’ in the name of plants that we select to make it easy to trace their origin. I am careful to only select the very best from hundreds of seedlings to name looking for good strong plants that increase well and also have features or a beauty that makes them stand out from the many.



Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister' (Picture courtesy of Y.T.)

The perfect reward for me is to see plants that I have raised growing so well in other gardens; often better than they will grow in our climate. This pot of 'Craigton Chorister' is grown to perfection by Tatsuo Yamanaka in Japan. I chose the name because the beautifully pleated pure white corona reminded me of the frilly starched collars worn by choristers.



Here is another; **Narcissus 'Craigton Clanger'**, (picture courtesy L.G.), flowering now outside in VRV President Luc Gilgemyn's Harelbeke garden in Belgium – this was one of two sister seedlings, involving *Narcissus romieuxii* and *bulbocodium*, that I selected to name. One I called 'Craigton Bell' because of the shape and this similar one, 'Craigton Clanger'.

The way the flowers emerge from the buds with the petals clasping the corona reminds me of a parachute that has to be carefully packed to enable it to deploy successfully. The floral parts continue to grow and expand after they emerge from the buds.



Interestingly all the first Narcissus flowers to open are those growing in the sand plunges even though we have the exact same clones growing in pots, shown above, where the very first flowers are just opening. The first Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister' flower can be seen on the right where there are two pots.



The flower buds in this pot of **Galanthus 'E. A. Bowles'** can be seen pushing their way up between the leaves.



Cyclamen cyprium



Cyclamen flowers are also showing colour out in the garden on the winter flowering **Cyclamen coum**.



Cyclamen coum



As I was clearing leaves I moved a few stones propped up on the sides of the low raised bed where the *Cyclamen coum* are growing and found a clutch of snails. This prompted me to go off on a snail hunt - winter is a good time to apply a degree of control of these pests looking on

the sides of pots, under troughs, between stones and such places where they gather to wait out the colder weather.



The flowers of these *Cyclamen coum* have yet to appear but for now I can appreciate the beautiful foliage.



Cyclamen hederifolium flowered through late summer and into autumn and now their leaves stand out against the natural mulch of brown leaf fall. This is one old very large plant with a spread of over 80cms, some of the leaves are 8cms wide.



At least two plants of silver leaved forms of *Cyclamen hederifolium* are growing together here.



Eventually the mild weather front also brought a day without rain plus bit of wind to dry out some of the fallen leaves such as these which have been blanketing the cobble bed under their soggy or frozen mass making it very fiddly to remove them.



The leaves dried sufficiently in the wind for me to finish the job in just a few minutes by blowing them away with the leaf blower.



This allows me to see all the shoots emerging from the bulbs. Regular readers will remember this is a sand bed full of bulbs including many Crocus, however the mice found it too easy to dig in the sand and ate most of the crocus so, in attempt to deter the predation, I decided to cover the sand with small stones. The bulbs find it easy to come up through the gaps, even if they are planted directly under the stones

which have prevented the mice from digging.



While clearing leaves in another part of the garden I found a group of Galanthus bulbs breaking the surface. This is the result of the bulbs clumping up to such an extent that they start to grow one on top of the other eventually pushing the topmost ones out of the ground – a sure sign that in this case lifting and splitting is overdue.



I also got the fallen leaves cleared from the bulb bed and at the same time cut the old leaves off the Hellebores again revealing the mass of shoots anxious, although maybe a bit premature, to get into growth.



The floppy leaves of an Allium are produced in the late autumn early winter then when the flowers stem emerges in late spring the leaves will start to look tatty as they turn brown.



This bulb bed is now cleared and mulched ready for the early growth and display of flowers.



Molly enjoys a walk round the garden with me to see what we can find.



Out of season colour is provided by a Doronicum flower which has survived due to the lack of any real cold.



The flowers of this Hellebore are well advanced and will soon be open.



Pseudofumaria alba is one of those plants that seeds around the garden and can flower at any time of the year even in the milder days of winter.



The still green leaves of these *Calanthe* hybrids is further evidence of the milder winter we have experienced so far.

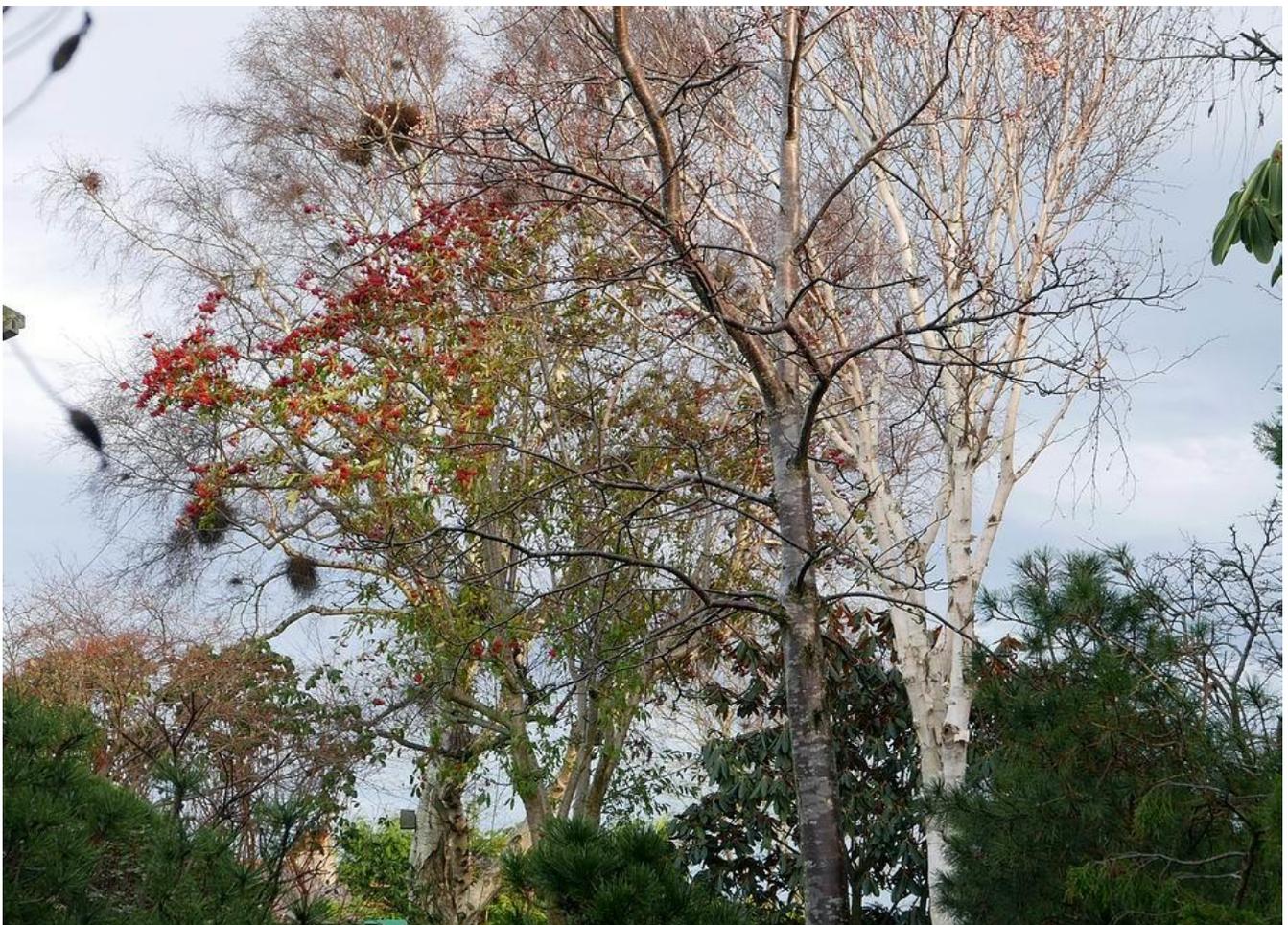
I am slowly getting last season's plant debris cleared and the beds prepared for the imminent appearance of the new season's growth.



Hedera helix – not to forget the common plants that support so much of our wild life such as the winter flowering Ivy whose flowers and resulting berries provide food with the tangled growth of stems and evergreen foliage scrambling up the southern boundary wall form an excellent habitat for nesting birds particularly Robins and Wrens.



View across the pond towards some of the trees including Acer, Birch, Cotoneaster, Pine, Sorbus, etc.



I wish everyone a very happy, healthy good gardening year in 2020.....