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# Bulb Log Diary

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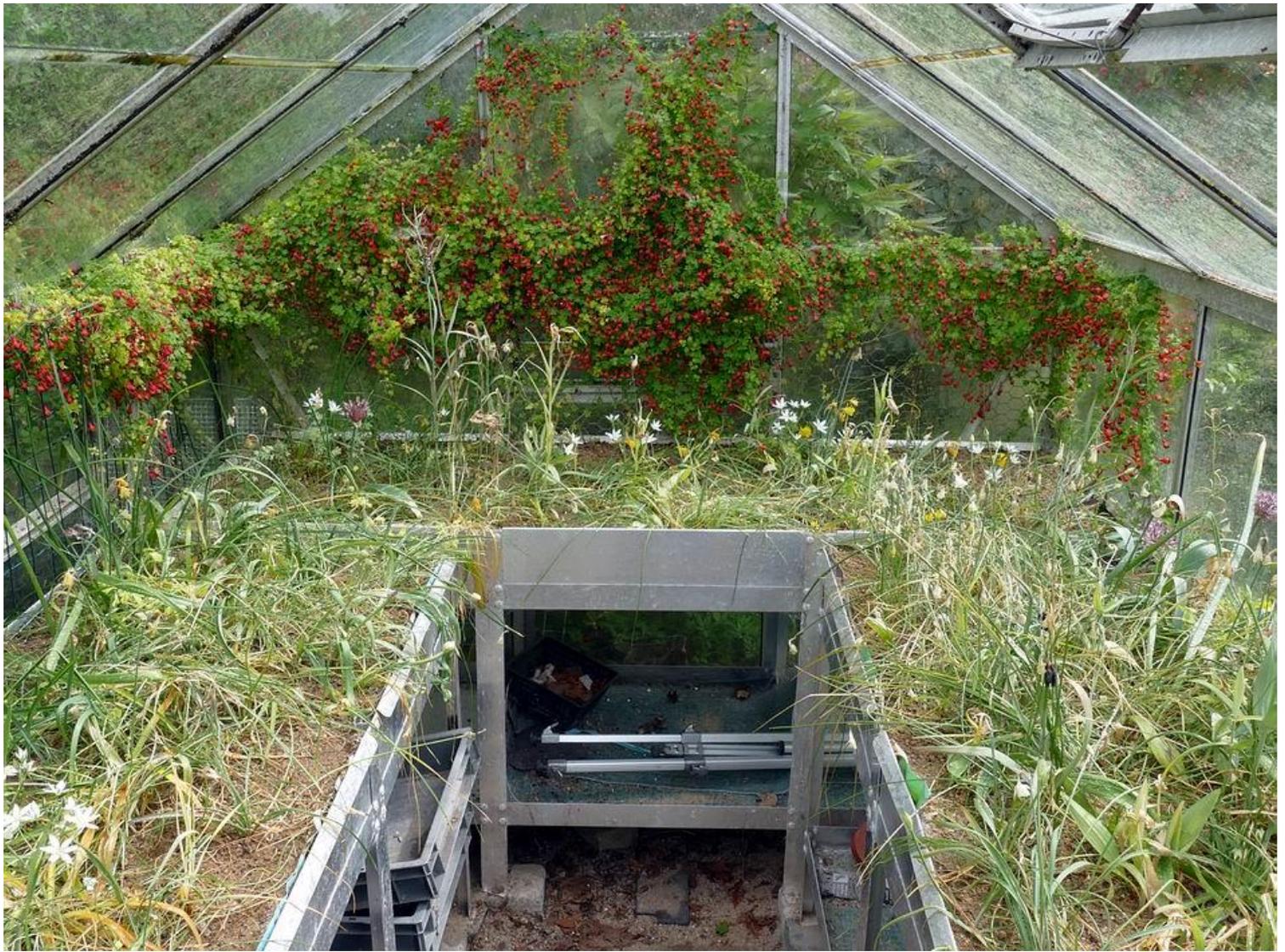
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BULB LOG 22.....27<sup>th</sup> May 2020



*Calochortus uniflorus*



**Calochortus uniforus**, shown on the front cover, is the only species of this lovely genus that we have managed to grow long term. We have tried many from seed, even raising some to flower, only to lose them again. However we have sustained *Calochortus uniforus* under glass for many years. After a long and floriferous season in the bulb houses, lasting all through the winter, the rising temperature means that the

leaves of the majority of bulbs are now turning yellow as they retreat underground for the summer but before they do there are a few subjects that can extend our flowering season for at least a few more weeks.



One such genus is **Ornithogalum**, the names of which remain a mystery to me as I admit I have never really studied them in that detail, just appreciated them for the late flowering display they bring to the bulb houses.



Some of those we were gifted as bulbs came with the locality where they originally came from - Greece, Turkey and Spain and interestingly although they are among the last in the season to push up their flowers their leaves are among the first to emerge in the autumn after watering.



Some have long narrow leaves others short wide leaves that lie flat on the sand - similarly some flower on very short stems while others have a spike of flowers on tall stems. If there is an expert out there that can identify any of them for me I would be delighted to hear from you.



**Ornithogalum sp.**

Alliums are another of the late flowering genera putting on a colourful display in the bulb house sand beds just now. Like the Ornithogalum many have leaves that emerge early and are dying back by the time the flowers appear.



**Allium nevs kianum**

Again I have no great knowledge of this genus but I do have the names from the original seed packets I received.



**Allium shelkovnikovii** has wider petals than many, giving the flowers a greater substance.



The flat stems of **Allium platycaule** seem to struggle to hold it upright - I have seen it growing in Oregon where it was coming up through low scrub which helped hold the flowers up.



## **Sinopodophyllum hexandrum**

As if it isn't difficult enough to learn all the plant names, taxonomists seem to be constantly changing them. I first knew this plant as *Podophyllum emodi* then it became *Podophyllum hexandrum* now it appears that I should be calling it *Sinopodophyllum hexandrum*!

It is fun that as well as changing its name this plant goes through various transformations during its growth cycle starting with these weird dark maroon humanoid like shapes pushing through the ground and steadily elevating as the stems grow taller.



Then the leaves start to expand like opening umbrellas displaying green leaves, heavily blotched in abstract patterns of dark maroon.



Then the apple blossom pink flowers push up from the stem, some rising above the top most leaves while others hide their beauty underneath to be enjoyed by those willing to look. Through the season the leaves will become more green and in late summer decorative large red tomato like fruits full of seeds will form, eventually dropping to the ground as the plant collapses to spend the winter underground again. If I search I can find clusters of seedlings growing where the fruits fell and rotted spilling their contents.



***Sinopodophyllum hexandrum*** flower and a cluster of seedlings.



**Hyacinthoides non-scripta**

To most it is the 'Bluebell' but traditionally in Scotland it is the 'Wild Hyacinth' - a naturalised bulb that if allowed will form extensive blue carpets in woodland which are much admired for their beauty. Why then are they so often shunned by gardeners? There seems to be further plant prejudice applied when Hyacinthoides

non-scripta is sometimes tolerated more so than Hyacinthoides hispanica and the hybrids.

I often ponder on the reasons why gardeners shun plants that grow and increase freely while lusting after plants that are often scarce and very difficult to grow.

I have always had a fondness for wild plants and over the years I have learned to selectively accept and enjoy some of them for the easy beauty they can add to the garden. I have learned which ones work well in our garden without becoming overly dominant and which to restrict in some way, often by removing the flowers after they have bloomed to prevent them seeding and occasionally digging up clumps if they become a threat to other less vigorous plants.



**Hyacinthoides hispanica and hybrids with Hyacinthoides non-scripta**



**Trillium kurabayashii and Uvularia grandiflora**



**Uvularia grandiflora** is also a wild plant, this time from Eastern North America. It grows in open woodland habitats just like the Hyacinthoides (Bluebells) do in UK but in this case most people would like to grow it.



We also introduced **Uvularia perfoliata** to the garden and both of these species have resulted in self-sown seedlings occurring around the parent plants.



The **Eranthis hyemalis** are now in seed and I actively encourage the spread of this plant by gathering ripe seeds and scattering them elsewhere in the garden where we would like to add their lovely early yellow flowers.



## **Eranthis hyemalis seeds**

Gathering and scattering the *Eranthis hyemalis* seed is like painting the beds with colour in slow motion. The lines or waves of yellow I draw with the seed will develop slowly until the lovely yellow flowers emerge in around three years. In many places I leave the seeds to scatter around the parent plants to reinforce and ensure the longevity of the colonies.



The *Eranthis* growing at the edge of this bed spill their seeds out into the gravel and as the seedlings mature I can lift and transfer them elsewhere.



These **Eranthis hyemalis** seedlings lifted from the gravel have been planted to deliver colour into another area next spring.



Even as they come to the end of their growing season the yellowing leaves illuminated by the early morning sunshine deliver a final display for this year.



A group of the yellow form of **Fritillaria affinis** rises up through the carpet of greenery at the edge of this bed and sadly in recent days I have found three pairs of copulating Lily Beetles (*Lilioceris lili*) in the garden.

Up to now I have only ever found one or two in a single area of the garden but now it seems like I have to be vigilant to limit the population of these beautiful but undesirable creatures.



As regular readers will know we encourage the growth of certain plants as a ground cover through which taller species can grow. Ensuring the plant combinations are suitable in scale we grow low small leaved plants in association with the smaller bulbous and other plants. Above we have a dwarf form of **Maianthemum bifolium yakushmanum** growing with **Cornus suecica**.



Both are herbaceous having just recently come back into leaf and they are perfect bed partners for the smaller Trilliums such as rivale and hibernsonii as well as Erythronium caucasicum, seedlings of which can be seen growing alongside one of this year's seed pods which has fallen in exactly the same place as a cluster of last year's seeds have germinated.



The ground cover here is formed of **Erythronium americanum** and **Pyrola media** the latter of which is evergreen.



Another wild flower which we use for ground cover in the front garden is **Galium odoratum** – it runs about creating this wonderful soft green carpet which is covered at this time of year in a mist of tiny white flowers.



A steady sequence of plants, including **Paeonia**, are happily growing up through the ground covering **Galium odoratum** and **Dicentra formosa**.



At this time of year there are also waves of colour above our heads here in the form of **Rhododendron fortunei**.



**Rhododendron fortunei**



**Rhododendron yakushimanum**



The front garden showing **Rhododendron yakushimanum** escaping out over the wall and **Galium odoratum** growing out into the edge of the east drive.



Another picture showing part of the interior of the front garden partially hidden from public view by the trees and shrubs



Click here if you have not yet seen my [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#) loaded since last week.

I will be doing a live session on the [Alpine Garden Society Members Group](#) Facebook page at **6pm** UK time on **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> June** talking about and answering questions on bulbs or whatever plants you may wish to ask about.

If you are an AGS member you can apply to join this group and take part in the event.

Watch the page for further information on how to take part and send in your questions.

I hope that many of you will join me then.....