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Bulb Log Diary -----

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BULB LOG 48.....25th November 2020



Reflections



If you look carefully at the cover picture the light appears to be coming from two directions – that’s because it is. The last of the acer leaves on these trees are receiving direct light as the sun rises while the branches of the Pieris in the foreground are illuminated by the light reflected back from our windows - an effect which only lasts for a few minutes.

This Pieris is one of the original plants in the garden, over 45 years old, and without regular pruning it would be a very large shrub however early on we decided to open it up, exposing the

lovely structure and opening up the ground below for planting. These Pieris will bud very well even from old wood so can they be cut back pretty severely - I have even seen them used as hedging plants.



The low light from the rising sun created many stunning momentary effects putting autumn leaves in the spotlight.



Paeonia lutea ludlowii





The process of shutting down for the winter is well advanced in most plants such as the yellowing and dying back growth of the various *Cyananthus* that carpet this slab bed.



It is only in the last few weeks that the *Cyananthus lobatus* hybrid stopped flowering and the foliage started turning colour - around the same time these new leaves of *Narcissus bulbocodium* were coming into growth.

It is an interesting time to reflect back to earlier in the year reminding ourselves of what we can expect to enjoy again early in 2021 as we start to come out of the winter.



Looking back to early March the first flowers to appear are **Eranthis 'Guinea Gold'** and **Narcissus cyclamineus**.



Moving on a few weeks **Narcissus bulbocodium** as well as **Narcissus cyclamineus** are among the smaller bulbs I am establishing for early interest. You can also notice the new growth on the **Cyananthus** emerging between rocks in the foreground. In addition to recording what was in flower at a certain time of the year these pictures are valuable to me as a planting guide.



The pictures are much better than notes scribbled in a notebook because they accurately record the gaps at this time of year indicating where I can plant more bulbs. It can take many years to achieve a good sequential planting and I use such pictures to guide me as I add ever more layers to a bed even in a small area like this slab bed.



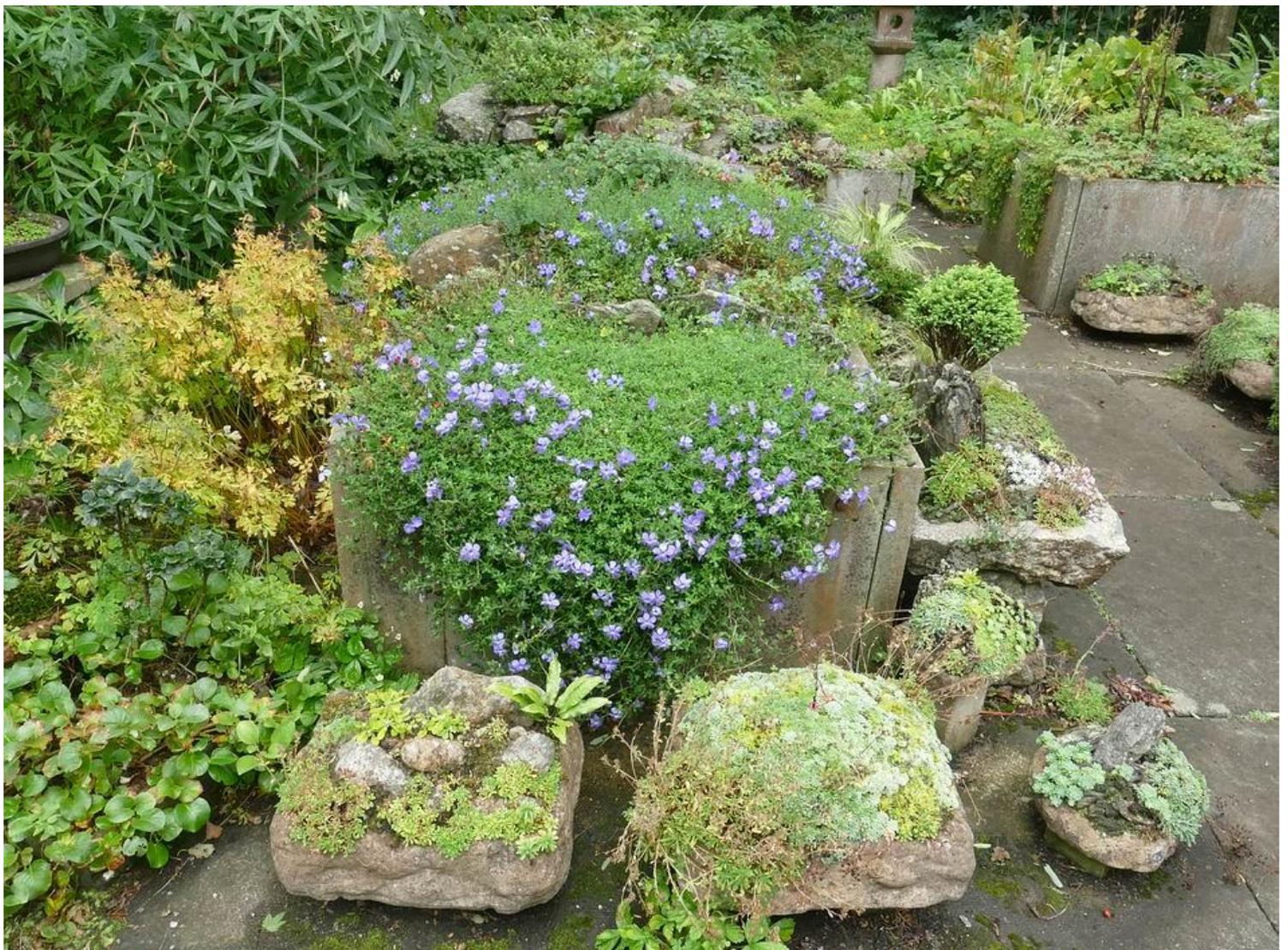
In early April the emerging *Cyananthus* growth is firm giving a good impression of being a cushion plant which is far from the truth as the next few picture show.



Gradually the growth of the *Cyananthus* extends as it starts to spread out.



The growth rate now makes it obvious that this is a mat forming plant and it does not stop when it reaches the edges but grows all the way down to the ground some 60cms below – in late July the first few lovely blue flowers start appearing then a succession of blooms emerge, see below, until the frosts eventually sends the plant into a winter dormancy.



The Cyananthus can start flowering in July with ever more blooms appearing until November.



This week I peeled back the mat revealing both the length of the stems and their source where they all rise up from a single clump.



Even now next year's shoots are emerging under the shelter of the matt of old growth giving a good reason to remove it.



Since I started to plant the bulbs in this bed it is even more important that I remove the old *Cyananthus* growth because the slugs it protects will feast on the new growth of the bulbs. How many slugs can you see?

Further across the bed you can I am lifting the mat of old growth on the *Cyananthus microphyllus* plant for exactly the same reasons.





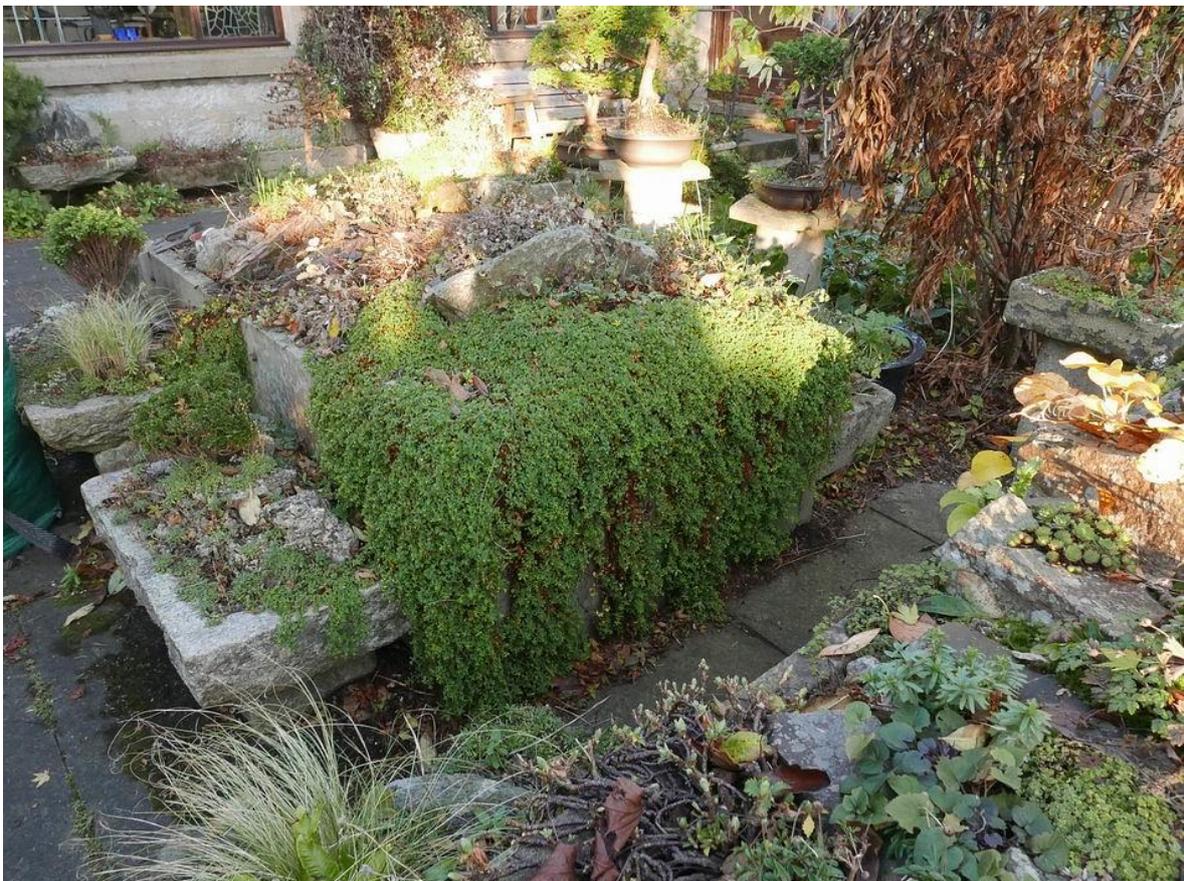
Cyananthus microphyllus



Here the new growth is also being encouraged to grow prematurely under the shelter of the old mat.



The other end of the same bed is covered in another Himalayan plant *Hypericum reptans* shown above earlier in the year and below as it looks now. This plant remains pretty well evergreen except in the worst of winters but I will trim it back to the top edge to allow for new growth next spring.





Another seasonal task is to cut back the remains of the old growth and clear all the wind blown leaves from the front driveways: this is after the initial clean up, as it dries I will do another sweep - below are some colourful reminders of the same drive earlier this year.





East Drive





Compare the east drive after the first stage of the annual clear up, shown above with the west drive before the work - below.





A few seasonal reminders of the plantings in the west drive pictured in some of the many phases it goes through. The drive way plantings have been established by simply scattering seeds on the gravel then allowing them to selfseed.





West Drive



I cleared some shrubs from this area a few years ago since when I have been gradually building up the layers by adding plants, bulbs and scattering seeds mostly from other parts of the garden. The following pictures act both as a record of the progress as well as a guide to where I can plant more and scattering seeds plays an important part in developing these schemes.



Early April



Late April



July



Back to the reality of the garden today where we have the winter ahead of us to tidy the old growth.



As I reflect back on the past season some Trillium shoots sit on the surface looking forward to the next.....
Click the link and join me on the latest [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#) garden walk.