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Bulb Log Diary

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Colchicum



It is Colchicum time in the garden where we have many group mixtures of *Colchicum speciosum* and cultivars showing subtle variations in the shape and colour of the flowers. As the day warms up and especially if the sun shines, the flowers open fully attracting the attention of many pollinators as well as the gardeners.





My words cannot easily describe the glorious beauty of these autumn flowers so just enjoy and study the variations in the following sequence of pictures showing the flowers enjoying some warm air and autumn sunshine.





Colchicum





Colchicum



Unlike most of the other bulbs in the garden that we raise from seed the majority of the Colchicum came to us as bulbs - neither do we get much in the way of viable seed setting so the increase is entirely vegetative however within three years a single Colchicum bulb will increase forming a nice clump producing a display of flowers.



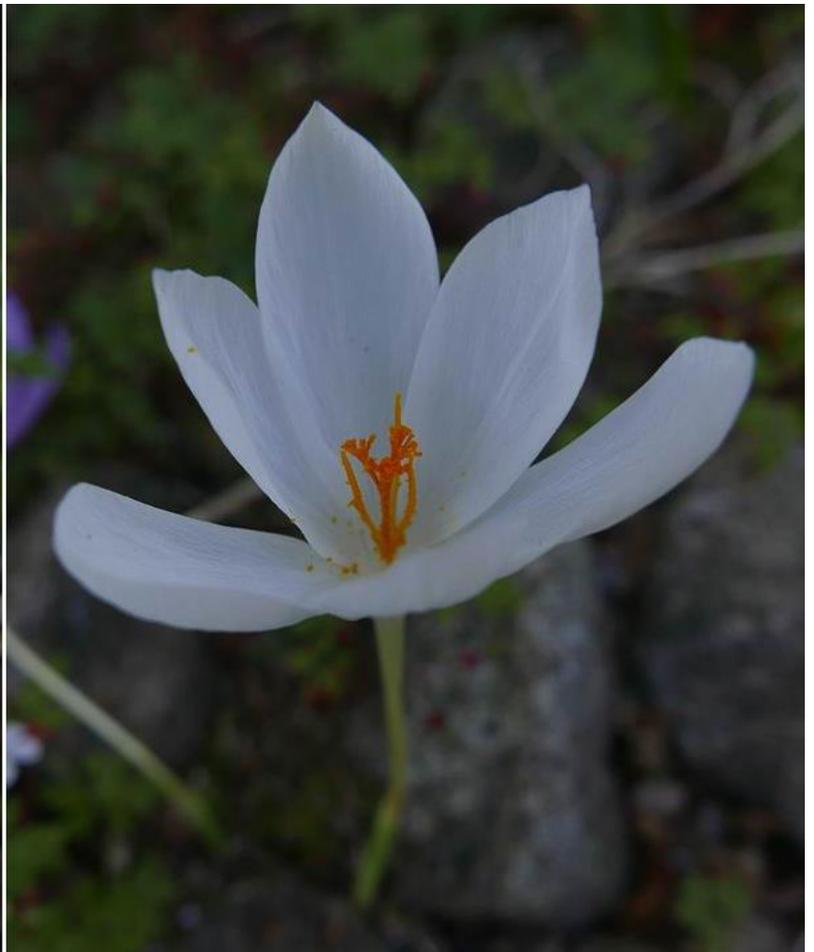
Colchicums will grow in a wide range of habitats and can be associated with many other plants.





Colchicum.

Moving on from the autumn flowering Colchicum in the next series of pictures I will share some of the autumn flowering Crocus currently flowering in the garden.



Crocus nudiflorus albus



Many years ago Brian Mathew gave us a corm of **Crocus nudiflorus albus** – a clone which went on to be given the cultivar name 'Orla'. We increased the single corm in a pot until we had enough to justify a mesh basket which we plunged in this bed. Since then it has increased like crazy spreading out by stolons well beyond the confines of the original basket, all through the other baskets of Erythronium and

other Crocus! In addition it sets seeds which dropped into the plunge producing a range of forms some the typical purple colour as well as a range of white forms.



As you can see the increase of **Crocus nudiflorus** in both its typical colour and white forms have spread in the bed into the gravel path and have now reached the other Erythronium plunge bed.



Crocus nudiflorus



If you look carefully you will see that some of the white forms towards the top of the picture have a slight violet tint when they open, these could be 'Orla', the flowers then age to white, other seedlings are pure white – there is also a variation in the width of the petals with the best forms having fuller more rounded flowers.



Moving to the cobble bed here are two colour forms of *Crocus nudiflorus* along with one of a range of garden *Crocus* hybrids that arose from seed ex our *Crocus speciosus* ssp *xantholaimos* which have most likely crossed with *Crocus kotschyanus* to produce a range of fully fertile offspring that continue to seed around the garden.



The cobble bed was one of my early sand bed experiments where we grew a lot of *Crocus* until one year the mice found it too easy to dig in the sand eating all the new corms as they grew.

We were devastated by the loss of so many *Crocus* and I came up with the idea of covering the sand with small stones which would greatly hinder the mice while still allowing the plants to grow. The mice only ate the tasty new corm leaving the old chewy ones

behind and over the intervening years adventitious buds formed on the old corms initially producing clusters of small leaves which year on year have matured to form flowering sized corms again. Now, protected by the cobbles, the *Crocus* are getting back to the numbers we had around five years ago before they were ravaged by the mice.



Looking down into the flowers of one of the regenerated clusters of ***Crocus speciosus* ssp *xantholaimos* hybrids**.

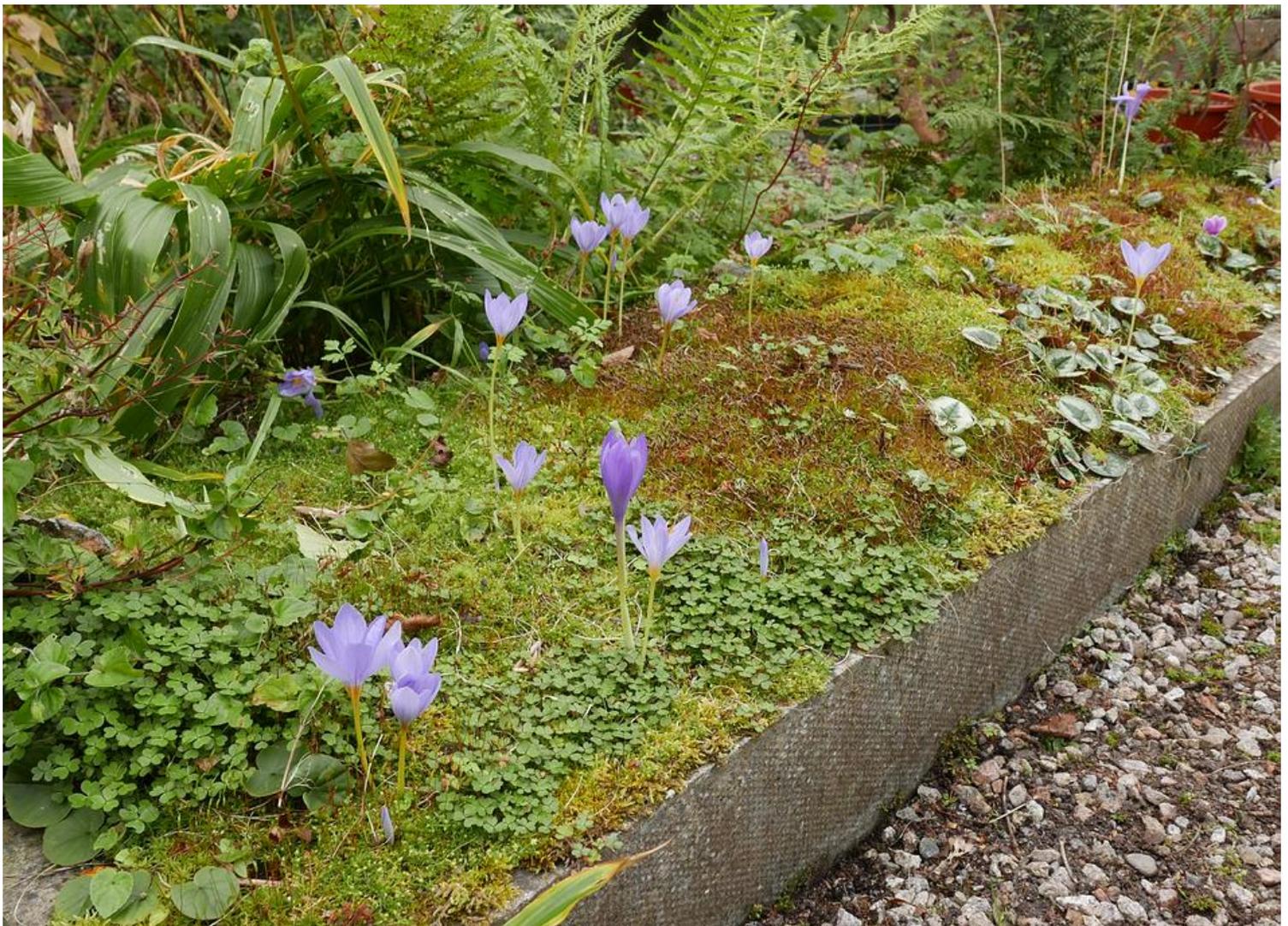
This is another early sand bed experiment where the mice also dug and ate the crocus around the same time. I used to spend a lot of time keeping the surface of the sand free of moss which of course made it easy for the mice to dig. Then I decided to experiment further to see what would happen if I let the moss grow. Since the moss grew to cover the surface there has been no further mice attacks and so far it has not in any way hindered the growth of the bulbs.





I rather like the colour variation of the mosses and the natural look with the Crocus and other bulbs flowering through the lush green carpet.

Despite trying for many years we have struggled to establish *Cyclamen coum* in the garden but they are thriving and self-seeding in this small moss covered sand bed along with *Cyclamen hederifolium* and other bulbs.



The Crocus population here is also recovering from the mouse attack and delivering a very natural look as they flower through their mossy carpet.



Looking down on *Crocus nudiflorus* flowers I am reminded of the pleasure we can get when we discover the plants that thrive so well in our garden conditions that they spread and seed around as if they were in their natural habitat – these are the plants we should cherish.



Crocus nudiflorus



Crocus speciosus ssp xantholaimos hybrids seeding around in one of the raised slab beds.



I will leave you this week with one more picture of the Crocus hybrids growing in the cobble bed along with the small white form of *Geranium robertianum* which is a perfect companion plant to grow along with the smaller bulbs and we happily allow it to seed around.....