



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

ISSN 2514-6114

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BULB LOG 31.....4th August 2021



The Power of Trees

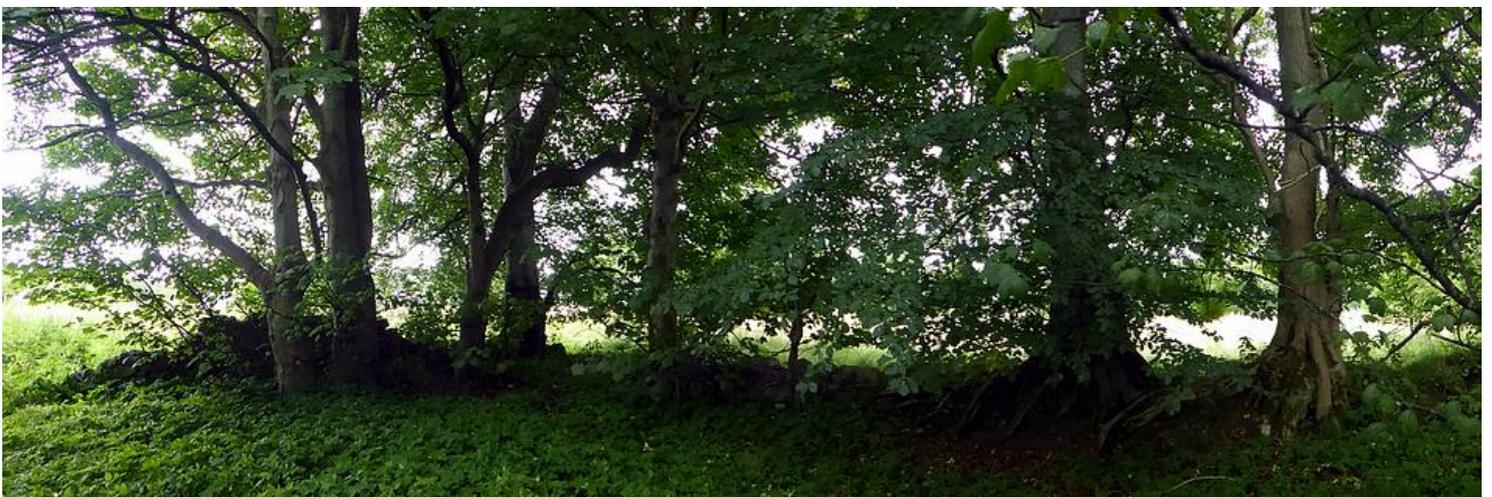


There has been much written about the benefits to our mental health of being in nature and especially in amongst trees – this is nothing new, in fact the healing power of trees and forests has been practised for millennium. It is a sad fact that these magnificent, often ancient, woody plants, which are so important to the balance of the planet, have been seen as nothing more than a harvestable resource. Since the Bronze Age trees have been cleared from large areas of land for agriculture as well as for smelting of bronze and for building, a process that has only

accelerated through the ages.

Fortunately there is a rising realisation of the importance of trees and forests to our climate and environment in general and we should have much more respect for these magnificent structures that support so much life.

I have loved trees since I was a wee boy when I would climb them (something that Maggi says I am too old to be doing now!) and have often campaigned to save them from being felled but sadly most authorities have more interest in developments than in preserving trees that are hundreds of year old.



These trees are among the many that grow on the same area of land that I showed a few weeks ago along with the wild flowers it is a ten minute walk away and is owned by developers but so far they have been refused permission to develop it and I hope that it stays that way.



It is difficult to capture the magical atmosphere when you walk through this avenue of twisted beech trees the picture belies how dark it feels. There is an increasing awareness of the benefits to our mental health that we get from being in a forest or among trees: an effect that can even be experienced standing under a lone large tree full of bird song.



My love of trees and growing them from seed is obvious from the woodland feel of our garden – we do not have enough room to create the effect of the wonderful old trees in the field but it is interesting to compare them with what we can grow. Some of our trees, like the two birches, are quite large now and they create a wonderful habitat below which we can grow a wide range of plants.



We may not have room or indeed the time to grow **Pinus sylvestris**, Scots Pine, to such a size as this group that are growing up the road but we can mimic the effect on a smaller scale.



This **Pinus nigra** has been grown in a pot for over forty years and it is a remarkable testament to the toughness of pines that it has survived growing in such a restricted container for so long with only occasional watering or feeding. The deeply fissured bark has a character that reminds me of the mature pine trees in the previous picture and just like the mature pines it attracts many birds that forage among the needles and the cracks in the bark.



Another favourite character tree is this large **Sorbus aucuparia**, Rowan tree, with new growths rising up from the trunk with the remains of old broken and rotted limbs – I also love the way the branches reach out towards the light.



Some of the elements of that Rowan tree are reflected in this **Ulmus x hollandica 'Jacqueline Hillier'** that started out growing in the rock garden until it outgrew the space, when it was lifted and trained to a pot.

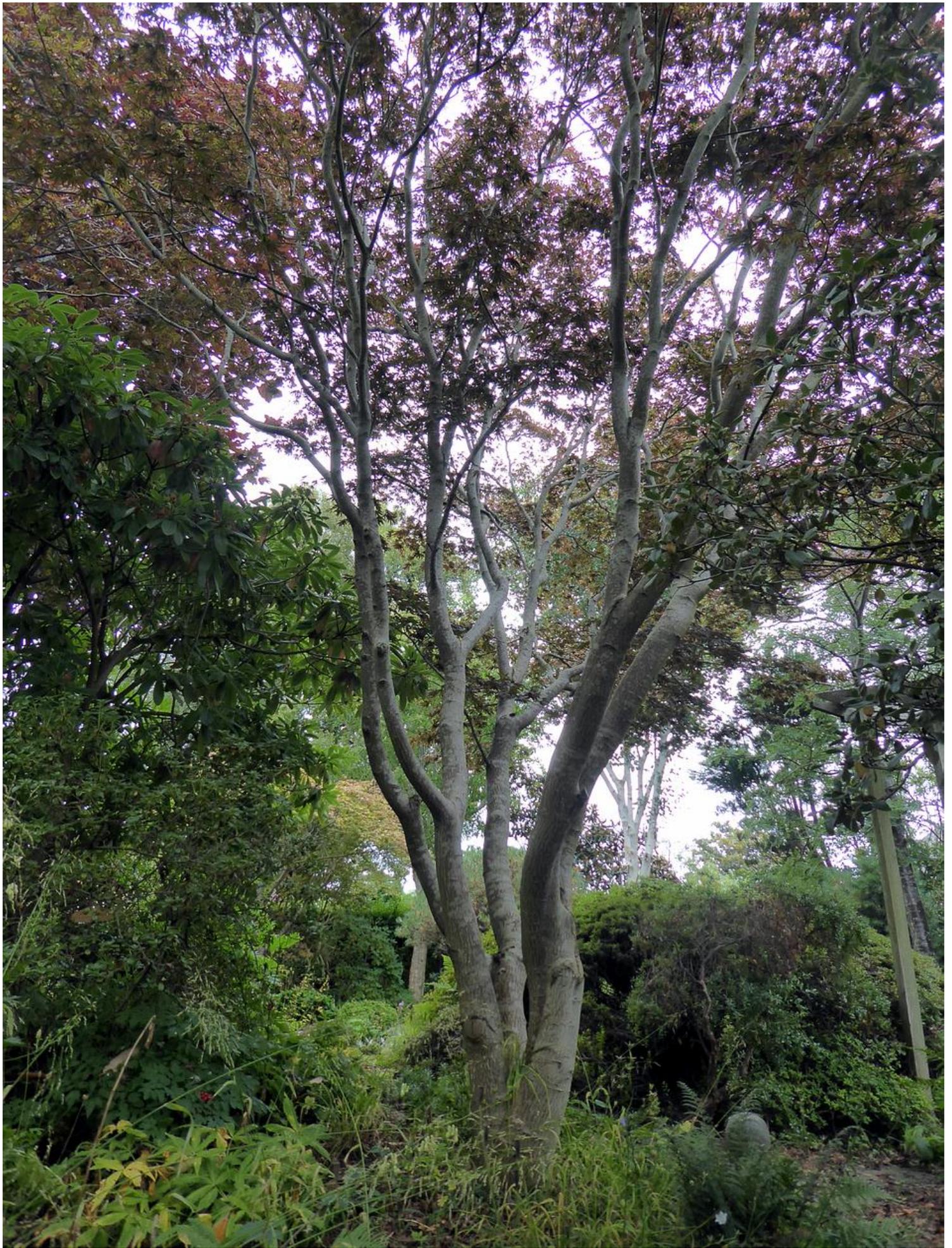


Now a mature specimen this **Sorbus aucuparia** germinated from a bird sown seed in that very spot 40 years ago.



A number of the Acers we raised from seed are now large trees, towering over our heads, but they are still in scale with the garden environment.





A red leaved multi trunked form of *Acer palmatum* is a stand-out character in the garden and is relatively large but is small compared to the muti- trunked tree shown below that is one of the many growing in the fields.





For those that do not know, Aberdeen sticks out into the North Sea which is around two miles, as the crow flies, from our home from where we can look down to the harbour mouth which is also the estuary of the river Dee. Since the 1960's Aberdeen has been a busy port servicing the North Sea oil industry however it is now slowly switching to develop and support renewable sources of power.

Interesting to think that oil, along with coal, started out as trees and plants that turned sunlight into carbon which were then buried deep in the earth where they were transformed into oil – the power of trees. These are the largest wind turbines in the world and form part of a development project to improve their efficiency. Apparently a single rotation of the propeller generates enough electricity to supply the daily the average electricity of a home.





The harbour mouth is a popular place to watch the dolphins however while I saw them today I only had a small compact camera with me so did not try to photograph them , beyond the pier is the sandy beach which runs for around 30 miles north from Aberdeen.



These walls are the ruins of the Torry Battery which is a fort built in 1860 to protect the port, now it is a watch point for dolphins and the occasional whales.



Another reason for my visit to this spot was to see the ‘Scottish Blue Bell’ **Campanula rotundifolia** growing on the steep grassy slopes that drop down to the beach.





The view back from the point across the ships docked on the river towards the west end of Aberdeen shows a lot of trees and indeed looks towards our house up on the hill - while below the view east from our front door step looks back towards the headland and Torry Battery.





We have several trees in the front garden including the cloud pruned *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Nana Gracilis' which attracts a lot of interest – a number of people have asked me where they can buy one of those!



In the foreground of the previous picture you may have noticed two volunteer *Hypericum* plants that I have to show again because they are both so beautiful and a wonderful source of food for the pollinators.





The first impression on entering the back garden is of the trees from the bonsai around the trough areas to the mature trees in our mini-woodland beyond.





I always tackle the big annual task of cutting the hedges, around August; by then the birds have finished nesting and the hedges are very shaggy with the growth pressing on the sides of the bulb houses.





'The first cut is the deepest' and indeed I cut back hard because we do not want the hedge to get any bigger.



I have not made life easy for myself - by building the glasshouses so close to the hedge!



It is a good feeling when the section behind the bulbhouses is cut or should I say harvested, because all the cuttings I have cropped are shredded then composted to be returned to the soil as a mulch in the winter.





I have stated that the garden is another medium where I express my creativity and it constantly throws up problems that need to be solved just like when I am painting or drawing, where one action may resolve one problem but creates others and so it goes on.

Strangely this problem comes indirectly from the Covid lockdown: let me explain.....

We feed the birds with sunflower hearts, which they have been eating their way through at around 3kgs a week and we love supporting them in this way, it gives us great pleasure to watch the large range and number of birds visiting and using the garden habitat. While the birds feed they drop small bits of the seed to the benefit of the small ground-feeding birds; however this year we have been plagued by town pigeons in increasing numbers which have trampled the areas directly under the feeders to such an extent that as well as squashing the plants they have eroded the soil. The town centre was always full of pigeons scavenging the leftovers of take away food and sandwiches from all the shoppers and office workers but that all changed with lock down so the pigeons have been forced to look for another easy source of food and this bunch have found that here.

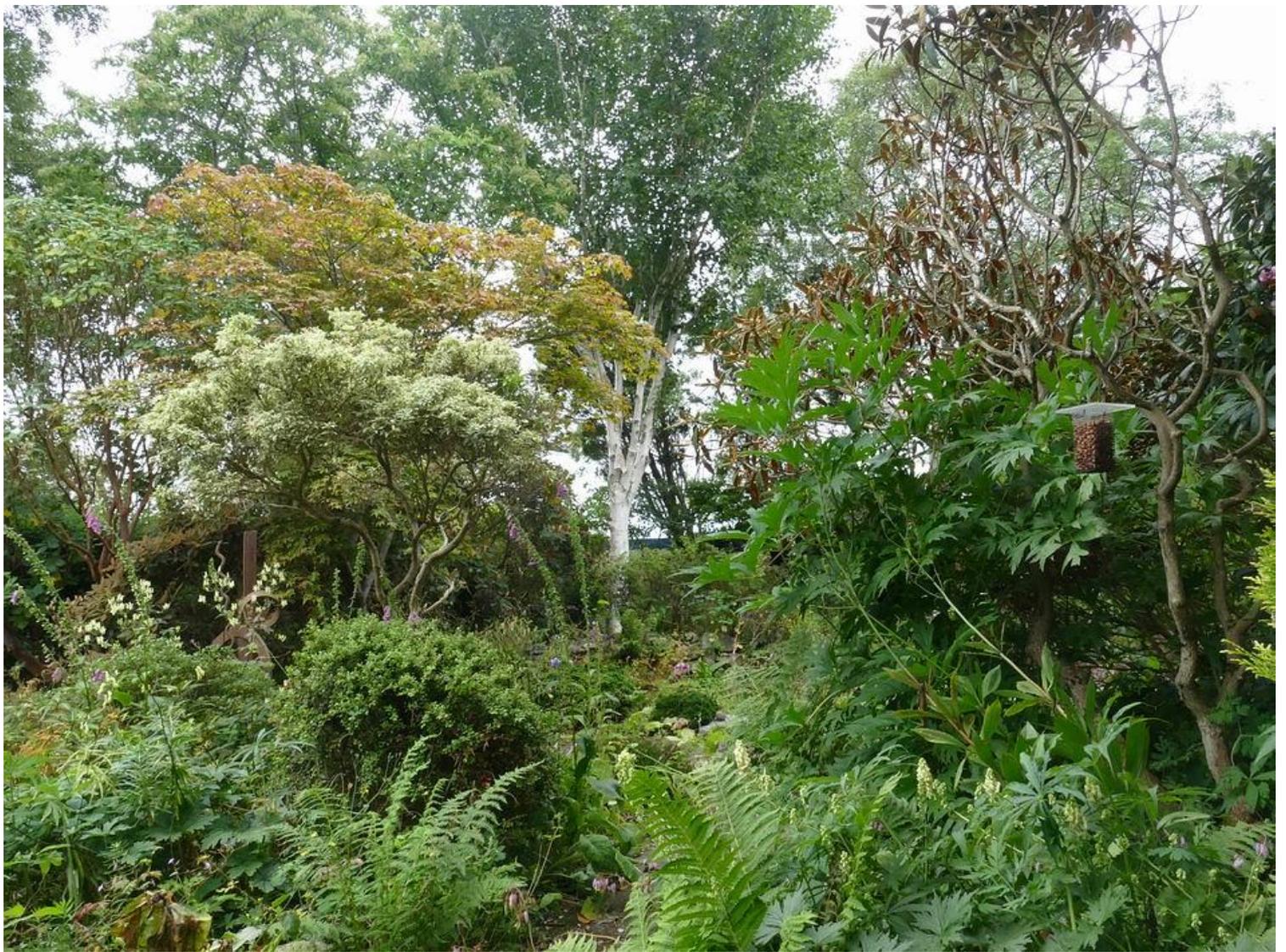
We have tried every form of chasing them away jumping up and down flapping our arms I even tried making a scarecrow, below, which made them nervous for about 5 minutes before one landed on its head. We have to be realistic that as long as we are feeding the birds the pigeons are here to stay and so I need to think of another solution for the areas under the feeders.



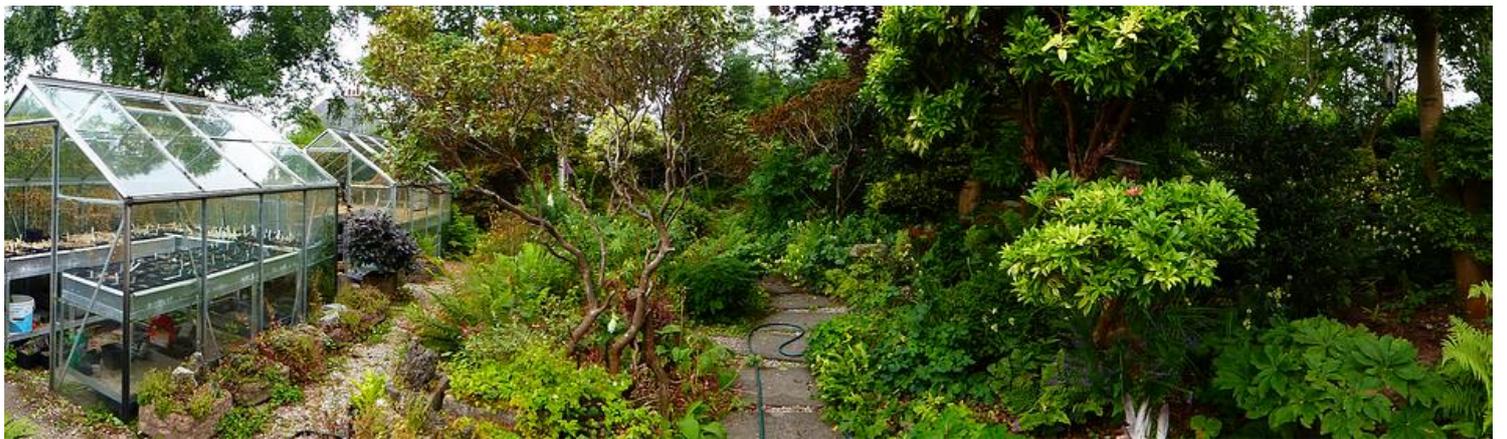


And so our action in feeding the small birds from the feeders has led to the problem we now have with the pigeons.





Returning to our own little woodland for the final few pictures where I have been playing with the 'panorama' function on my camera to try and give a wider view and a better impression of being here.





The march of pylons is a necessary evil if we want electricity in our lives just like the increasing number of wind turbines, also necessary as we strive to get away from burning fossil fuels. As observers of plants we have all seen the effects climate change is having on our plants and gardens but this is as nothing compared to the heat waves and terrifying wild fires I am seeing on the news. So we need to change: trees have been described as the lungs of the world, especially the great forests but every tree counts, no matter what size it is, trees can make a garden complete and a better environment so we should all grow at least one.....