

# International Rock Gardener

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# ---International Rock Gardener---

January 2021



Welcome to year twelve of the IRG at a time when we sincerely hope that the coming year will see a return to more ordinary activities that we are all used to, with freedom of travel and congregation. The lack of opportunity to meet up with like-minded plant lovers has been a much-regretted downside of the past year and gardeners, as some of the most sociable folk around, have certainly found the lockdowns wearing – if a good chance to catch up on weeding!

Cover image: *Meconopsis* 'Sikkim' at Branklyn Garden – photo by Jim Jermyn.

Authors this month are Wim Boens from Flanders, Jim Jermyn from Scotland and Zdeněk Zvolánek from Chechia.

Wim's interests include his commitment to the VRV- Vlaamse Rotsplanten Vereniging (the Flemish Rock Garden Club), the Crocus Group and writing plant articles for various organisations. Since Jim gained his horticultural qualifications he has worked in Germany, Italy and the UK, owning for many years the famous Edrom Nursery. He has led many plant tours, written books and was a leading light for the Gardening Scotland Show before taking charge at the NTS property, Branklyn Garden. Zdeněk is perhaps the most famous of all the Czech Rock Masters. His involvement with the regular rock garden shows in Prague and as Editor in Chief of the journal of Klub skalničkářů Praha (KSP) is as legendary as his work making crevice gardens around the world. A founder member of the IRG team, ZZ often reports here on his own steep, rocky garden in Karlick, known as the Beauty Slope.



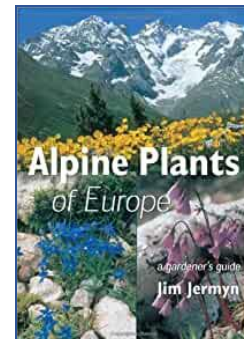
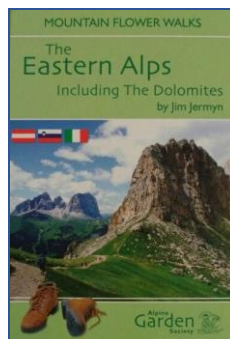
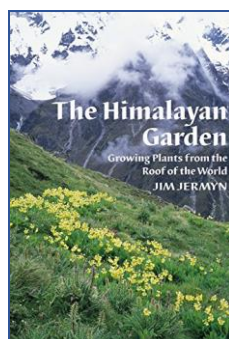
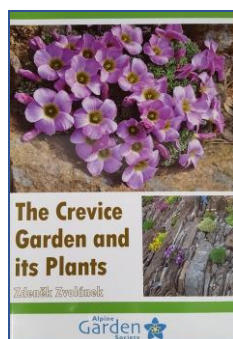
Wim Boens.

Jim Jermyn showing visitors round Branklyn.



Zdeněk Zvolánek – photo Marit Friberg.

Book covers by Zdeněk Zvolánek and Jim Jermyn.....





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## --- Plant Portraits ---

### **The fetid and the beautiful, *Arum pictum* by Wim Boens**

Synonyms: *Arisarum pictum*, *Arum balearicum*, *Arum corsicum*, *Gymnomesium pictum*.

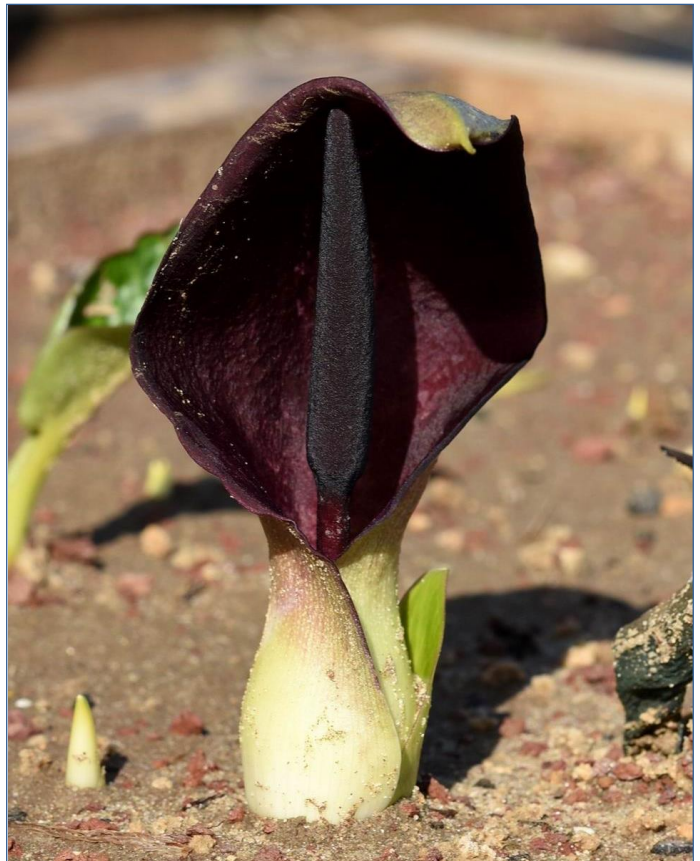
This dwarfish Arum, from the family of the Araceae (subfamily Aroideae, tribe Araceae) is an easy growing species, suitable for a dry, warm spot in the garden or in a pot. Next to its relatively big flower, with a beautiful dark spathe and spadix, the scent of the flower of the “painted Arum” might be its most notable feature: it can be described as “rotting corpse with undertones of sewer and dung”. This “pleasant” scent is meant to attract its natural pollinators.

*Arum pictum* (Photo Oron Peri)

*Arum pictum* was first described from the island of Corsica by Linnaeus in 1782.

It grows in the wild on the Balearic Islands, Corsica, Sardinia and Tuscany, its unique feature being that it flowers in autumn, at the beginning of its growing period. As the leaves emerge, they are often dark green with a metallic sheen, and as they mature, this shine disappears, while the veins keep on getting paler. In general, they do not get any taller than 25 cm but most of the time they remain a lot smaller. The forms from the Balearic Islands have broader leaves with a more pronounced colour to the veins and more glaucous leaves. In 1997 these Balearic forms were classified as *Arum pictum* subsp. *sagittifolium*. A lot of the botanists do not accept this classification and call it natural variation within the species.

Below: Sagittate leaf, unnamed forms (Photos Hagen Engelmann)



Shiny leaf forms, good veins  
(Photos Hagen Engelmann)





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In the wild they are often found growing on calcareous and well drained soils, mostly on terra rossa. They grow both in shade and in full sun, growing bigger and with greener leaves or smaller and with more glaucous leaves, respectively.

*Arum pictum*: 3 different forms (Photo Wim Boens)



Finally, I would like to get rid of a common misconception. There is no link between *Arum pictum* and “*Arum italicum* ‘Pictum’”, except for the fact that they are species from the same genus. The second one mentioned is a selection from a completely different species, which grows a lot larger and increases a lot quicker. The correct name of that one is now *Arum italicum*, Marmoratum Group, by the way.

### The species and its cultivars.

A few interesting cultivars of this species have been selected thus far.



*Arum pictum* (Photo Oron Peri)

*Arum pictum* foliage, regular form (Photo Wim Boens)



*Arum pictum*, common form (ex hort)  
(subsp. *pictum*) The one you will find on offer in most catalogues has a dark green leaf, with a thin, dark brown rim. The spathe is greenish with brown-red flames on the outside and a brown-red colour on the inside. The spadix is dark brown, almost black.



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*Arum pictum* 'Green Spathe' (Photo Oron Peri)

### *Arum pictum* 'Green Spathe'

(subsp. *sagittifolium*) Named by Oron Peri. John Fielding did cross a few plants from Majorca with the cultivar 'Primrose Warburg'. From the first generation of seedlings this form arose, with a green spathe, which contrasts nicely with the dark spadix. Regrettably, the leaf does not have the clear silver veins of 'Primrose Warburg'. To get there, John is now crossing them further, to see what the F2-generation will yield as result.

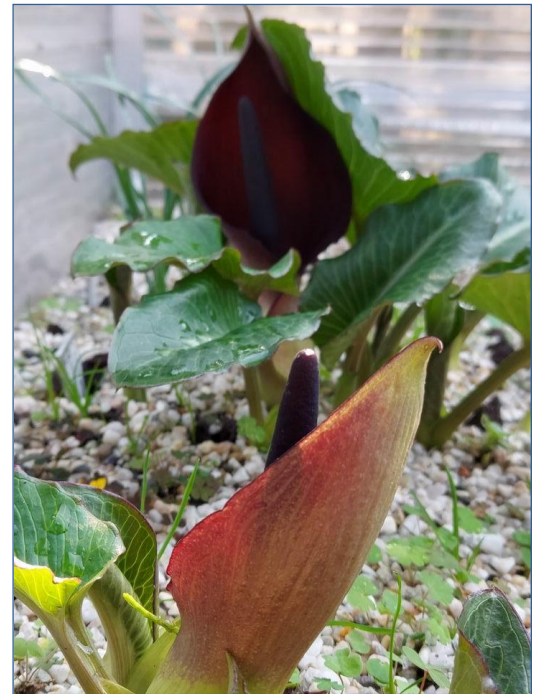
*Arum pictum* 'Olbia Black Night' in the background (Photo Ruben Billiet)

### *Arum pictum* 'Olbia Black Night'

(subsp. *pictum*) Found by Paolo Laghi near Olbia, in the northeast of Sardinia and named by him in 2020. This form has similar leaves to the "common form" but a bit bigger and



the spathe of the flower is very dark, purple on the outside and an intense dark purple (almost black) on the inside.



*Arum pictum* 'Olbia Black Night' (Photo Wim Boens)



## ---International Rock Gardener---



*Arum pictum* 'Primrose Warburg' (Photo Wim Boens)

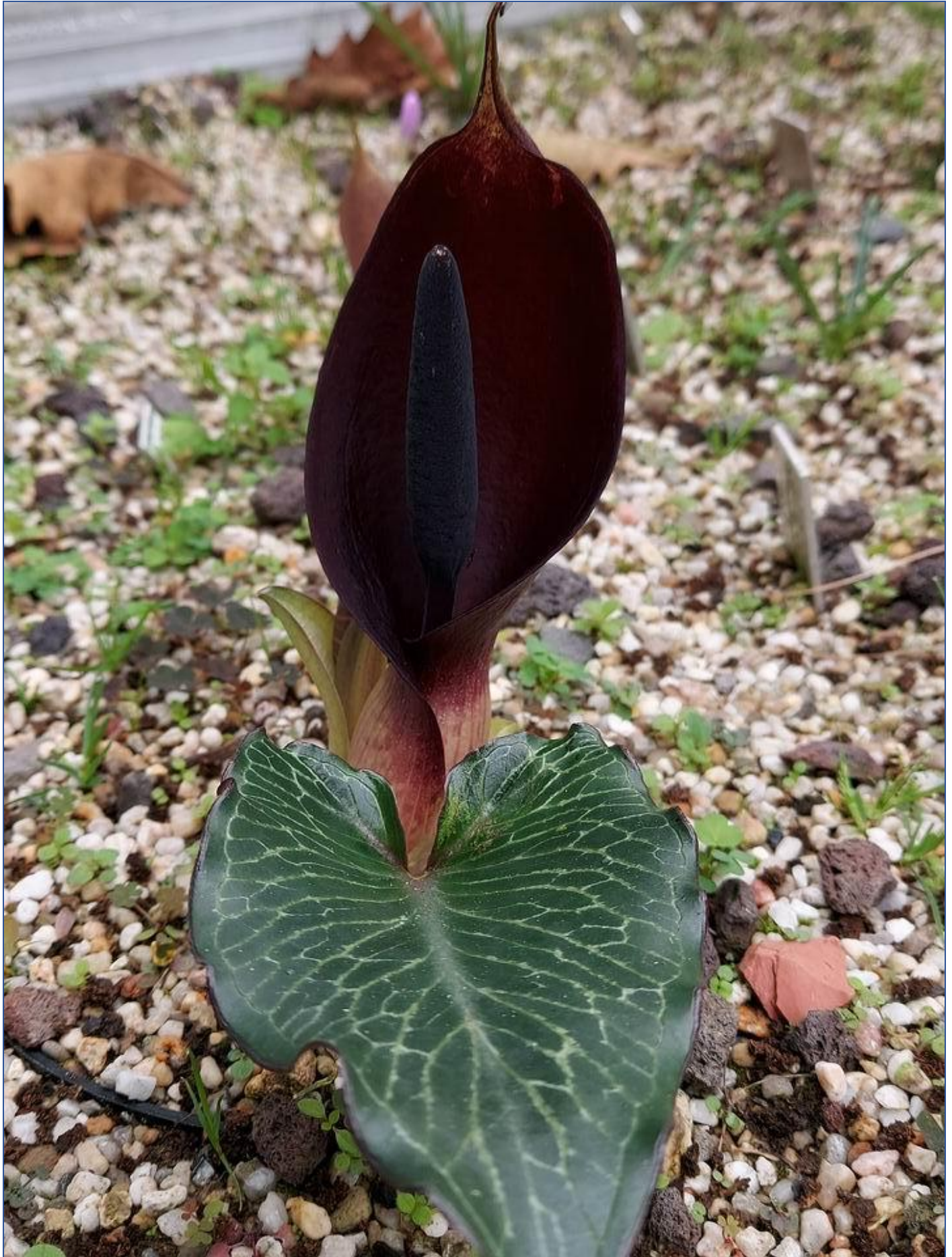
*Arum pictum* 'Primrose Warburg' (syn.: *Arum pictum* 'South Hayes')

(subsp. *sagittifolium*) This is a wonderful form, named for one of the English plantswomen, who owned South Hayes gardens. In 1990 Ray Drew received this plant, originating in Majorca, from Primrose Warburg herself. Later he named it in her honour. With this form, the leaf has a clear web of silvery veins, which are visible as soon as the leaves emerge, this makes it easy recognisable between all other forms. On top of that, the metallic sheen on the leaf remains present until the plant goes into rest. The flower is similar to the one described with the "common form".

Below: *Arum pictum* 'Primrose Warburg' foliage (Photo Wim Boens)







*Arum pictum* 'Rotsporn' (Photo Ruben Billiet)





*Arum pictum* 'Rotsporn' (Photo Hagen Engelmann)



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*Arum pictum* 'Rotsporn' (far right)  
unnamed form (left) (Photo Hagen  
Engelmann)

*Arum pictum* 'Rotsporn'  
(subsp. *sagittifolium*) Seedling from  
Hans Achilles, named by Hagen  
Engelmann. It has the beautiful white  
veins of 'Primrose Warburg' and  
additionally, the central vein is  
coloured purple (hence the "red spur")  
Both the spathe and the spadix are  
darker than those of the "common  
form".



Quite a number of other forms are in trial to be named, e.g.: a form with a bicoloured flower and a very glaucous leaf, a form with both a green spathe and a green spadix, a plant with a red spathe ...



Leaf with red rim, unnamed form (Photo Hagen Engelmann)





Bicoloured flower with glaucous leaf (Photo Toni Sastre)





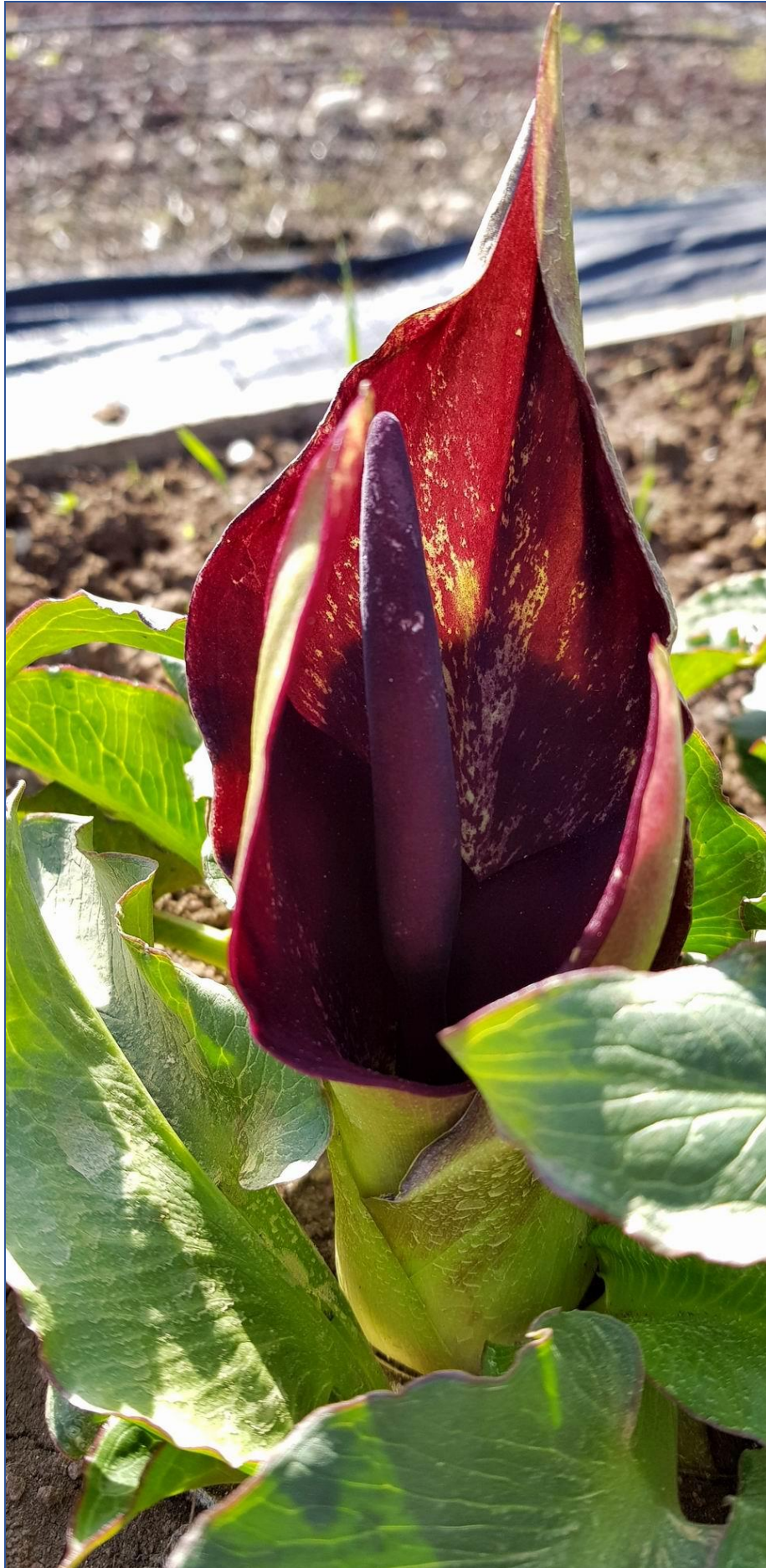
*Arum pictum*, unnamed form with both a green spathe and a green spadix (Photo Ruben Billiet)





*Arum pictum*, unnamed plant with a red spathe (Photo Oron Peri)





*Arum pictum* with triple spathe (Photo Oron Peri)





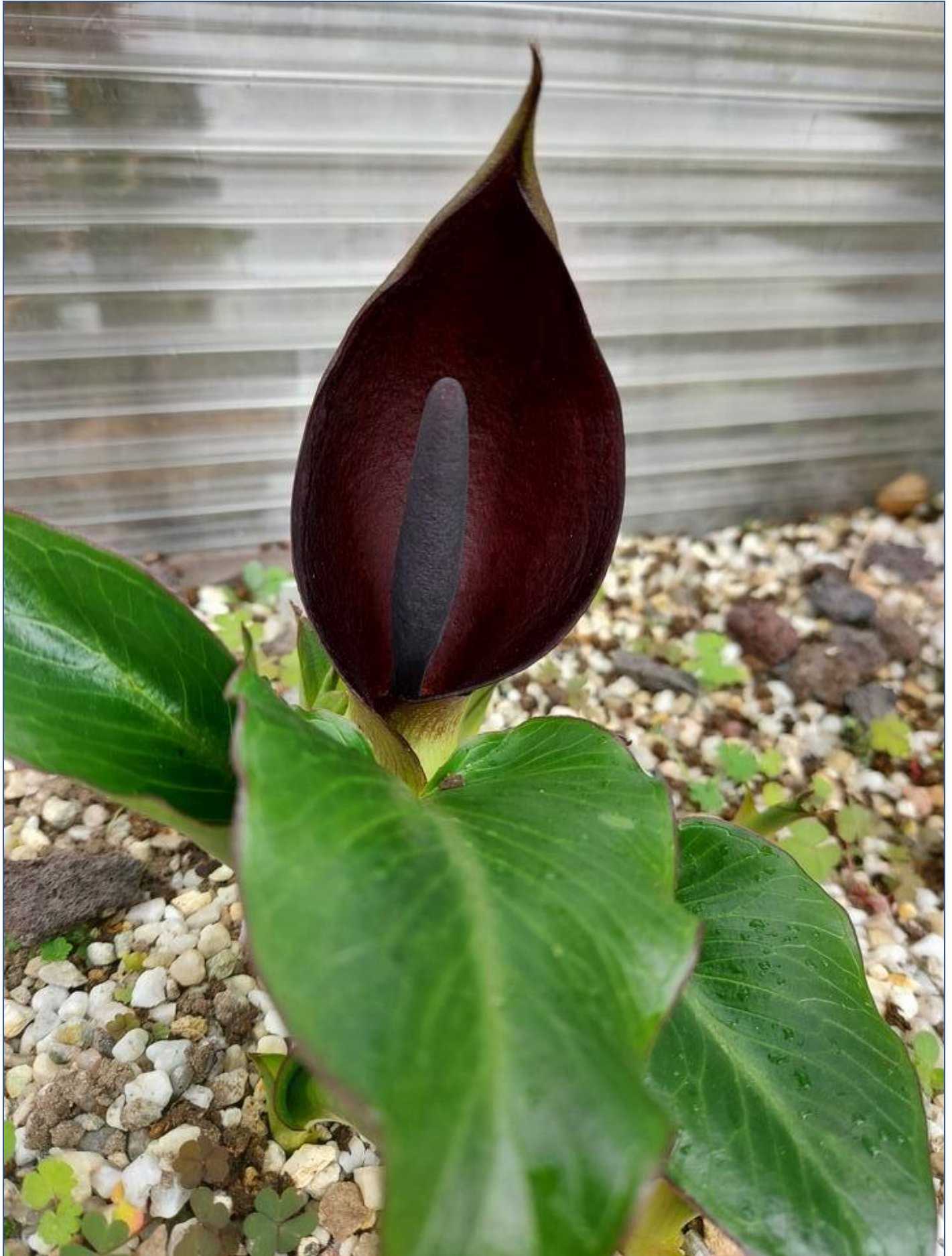
*Arum pictum* MM01 (MM = Michael Myers) (Photo Ruben Billiet)





*Arum pictum*, unnamed form (Photo Ruben Billiet)





*Arum pictum*, unnamed form (Photo Ruben Billiet)





*Arum pictum*, form with reddish flower, unnamed form (Photo Hagen Engelmann)

#### **In cultivation**

In my garden it has been an easy-going plant. For the time being I have been keeping them in pots, cool but above freezing in winter and cool and dry in summer. I must say I have seen them growing in the open garden near Cambridge in England, where they formed nice, big patches; so I am quite sure they could withstand our Belgian climate outdoors as well. They seem to be able to grow perfectly, both in full sun and in dappled shade, with it influencing the shape and colour of the leaves, depending on the light intensity.

As for the soil, they like a well-drained mixture, moist but not wet in winter and dry in summer. They do appreciate some high-potassium fertiliser in their growing season too. As drainage material, I like to use a calcareous kind of stone, such as pumice, since they love calcareous soils in the wild too.



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This does not seem to be an absolute requirement, though, because some people have them growing in a more neutral soil-mix. Personally, I've never had any problem with diseases and pests, I know they can be susceptible to rust (*Uccinia sessilis*) and smut (*Melanostilospora ari*), mostly when grown in a collection with other aroids, when you notice an infection they can either be removed and thrown away or be treated with a systemic fungicide: after treatment mature plants will not suffer much, but young plants and seedlings quickly die from these fungal infections. Also, I'd assume that excessive water in summer (and probably in winter too) would lead to rot.

### Sources

Personal communication: Hans Achilles, Ruben Billiet, Gianluca Corazza, Ray Drew, Hagen Engelmann, John Fielding, Dr. John Grimshaw, Paolo Laghi, Daniëlle Monbaliu, Oron Peri, Toni Sastre.

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Boyce, P. (2006). *Arum* – A Decade of Change. *Aroideana* 29 2006,132-137.

Rosselló, J. & Sáez L. (1997). Note on some Balearic *Araceae*. *Acta Botanica Barcinonensia* 44: 169-174.



*Arum pictum* with green spathe, not the cultivar 'Green Spathe' but similar (right), unnamed form (left) (Photo Hagen Engelmann)



# ---International Rock Gardener---

## --- Covid Tales ---

### **The Trials and Triumphs of “Lockdown” at Branklyn Garden by Jim Jermyn**

I can confidently say that the period of lockdown experienced by myself, as Property Manager/Head Gardener, here at [Branklyn Garden in Perth](#) was an absolute joy!

I say that with immense respect and sympathy to my many friends and colleagues who were either furloughed or whose jobs were put at risk and worse still made redundant. My thoughts were often with them as I could work normal hours (that is, perhaps often a 10-hour day) enjoying every moment of the peace and solitude afforded by tending a one-hundred-year-old, 2-acre garden laid out by a truly inspired couple, Mr and Mrs. Renton. Peace and solitude were palpable as I could barely believe how quiet the normally busy Dundee Road could be, adjacent to the garden. The constant sound was of bird song, in frequent company of Orange Tip butterflies unaccustomed to the lack of visitors in the garden.



*Galanthus 'Sickle'*



*Galanthus 'Alison Hilary'*



Pippa, the Jermyn's Jack Russell terrier.

My team, consisting of my wife Alison, Alistair (first gardener) and apprentice Jamie were all furloughed and not allowed to work in the garden or indeed to visit, extraordinary times! We had enjoyed a busy but cold and wet Snowdrop Weekend in Mid-February and that was the last I saw of any visitors until 3rd July! As luck would have it, I was able to take delivery of 2 x ton bags of fine path gravel and the same of tree bark. I was thus able to



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ration myself to 3 barrow loads per day, transporting the material to the respective paths enabling me to make a reasonable attempt to maintain fitness!!

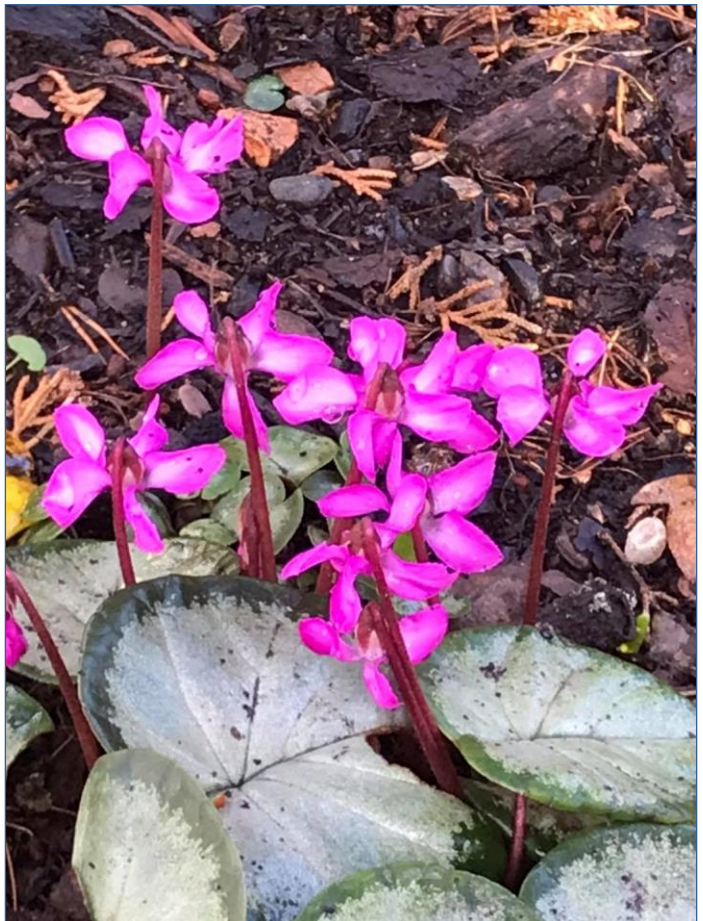


Branklyn Staff: Jamie Sinclair and Alistair Chalmers

Monday 23rd March 2020 – enter Lockdown  
Each morning I awakened at a little before 6.00am and showered and took our Jack Russell terrier out for the necessary. I had a spring in my step as I was excited to get to work. Never had I breakfasted with such an eagerness to get cracking, where would I start? Simple – as I write down a daily schedule every single morning after breakfast or the previous evening. This was the key to prioritizing the main jobs so as not to allow any one part of the property/garden to fall into disrepair. Quite frankly, there were so many tasks to carry out that I knew I would only be able to handle a few of them per day. Watering, Grass-cutting and edging were essentials for me, to give me the satisfaction that made me feel I was in control, knowing deep down that of course I was not!!

A daily discipline of some essential weeding kept a measure of control, but I knew I would soon need help.

Jamie and Aaron (one of our volunteers) had sown many pots of seed, ranging from Meconopsis, Primula to some exciting alpine plant species, these would soon require pricking out! I decided to limit myself to pricking out 3-4 seed trays of seedlings each morning, immediately after breakfast. This was an important task and could not have been managed without a disciplined approach! As March ran into April and May was soon approaching, I was so excited about the flowering of so many hundreds of plants from Spring Bulbs (including Erythronium) to Rhododendron, Peonies, Meconopsis, Primula as well as Cypripedium and Nomocharis and still not a visitor in sight. Just Alison, myself, and a Jack Russell terrier. I would spend time walking around the garden each evening with Alison and armed with a Gin and Tonic as we mused over the amazing array of plants. Never had we enjoyed the time and peace to take in the array of Mr and Mrs Renton's floral legacy. Quite remarkable.



*Cyclamen coum*



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In time I realized that despite my routine and the pressure of watering, the diversity of tasks was beginning to take its toll. I needed help! And then the rain came as well as the weeds. We were now well into June and still no end to the Lockdown, I asked my Area Manager if I could now have my apprentice un-furloughed, Yes was the reply and how Jamie and I got cracking, weeding, watering and all the regular Branklyn jobs now shared! It was also a privilege to walk around the garden and show Jamie the highlights. He is very keen to learn.

Soon we would be preparing for re-opening and Alison and I sought to be allowed to open the Tearoom with socially distanced tables set out on the lawn and terrace. We pleaded to have the toilets re-opened. Yes, was the answer and thank goodness common sense prevailed; we positioned Hand-sanitizers at the entrance, in the shop and of course at the entrance to the Tearoom.

The 3rd July arrived.

We re-opened to the public! No pre-booking and no holdups. So that was it. Lockdown was over and we had survived as a family, as a team and as an organization. We are not out of the wood yet; we await the mass vaccine and a gradual return to normal. I do not take for granted our good health and wellbeing, many people have suffered, lost their jobs and much worse lost their lives. Gardening has



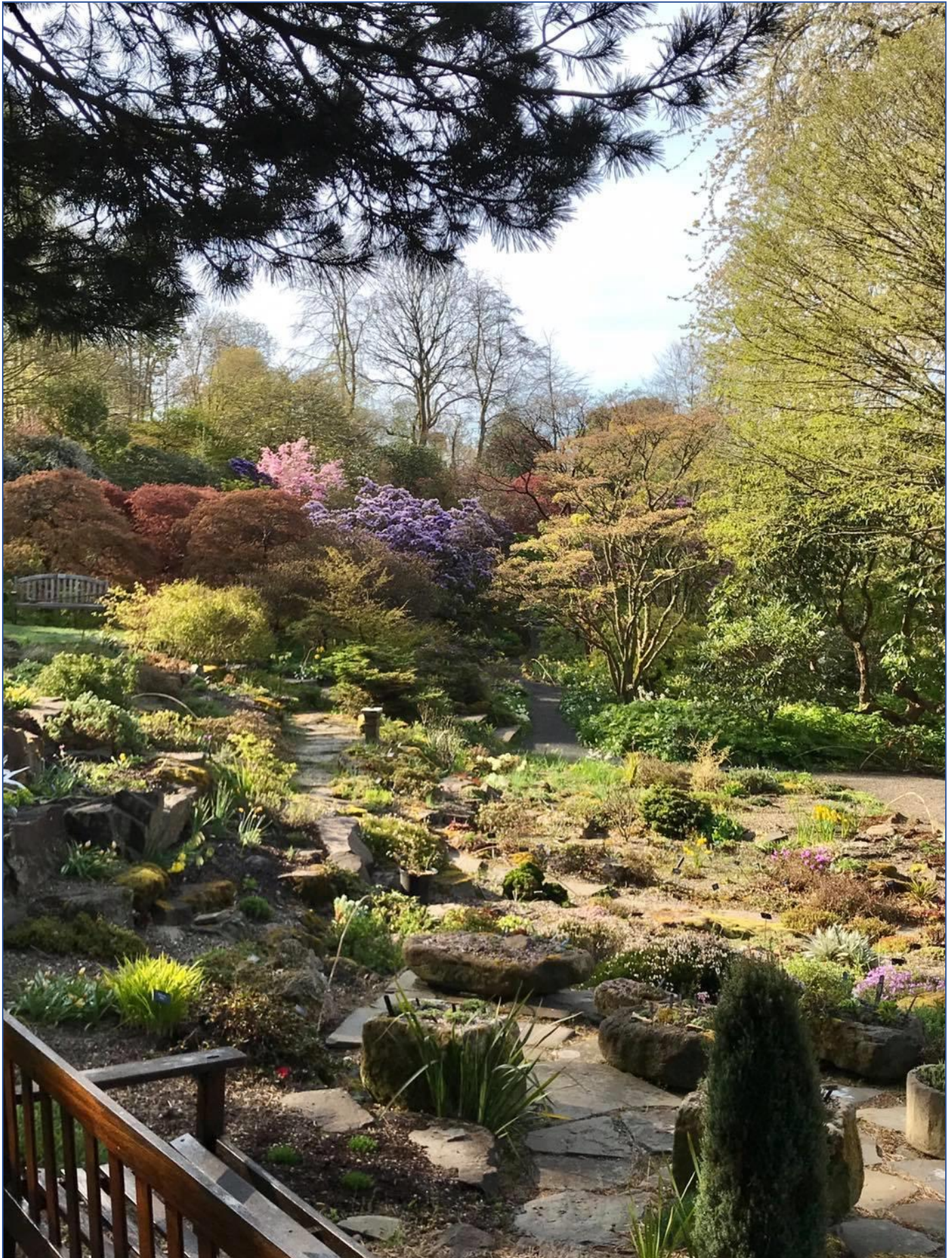
become an ever-popular hobby, NTS Branklyn Garden has been enjoyed by many new visitors. I am extremely thankful to our wonderful volunteers in the garden, shop, and Tearoom. We are a team here and I hope that the accompanying pictures will show some of the Garden's highlights. This is a plantsman's garden laid out with great care and taste by Dorothy Renton and her husband. Next year will be the Centenary of Branklyn, celebrations a plenty! 2020 has truly been a Challenge, a Trial, or a Triumph; I know that Alison would agree with me – a real triumph!

J.J.

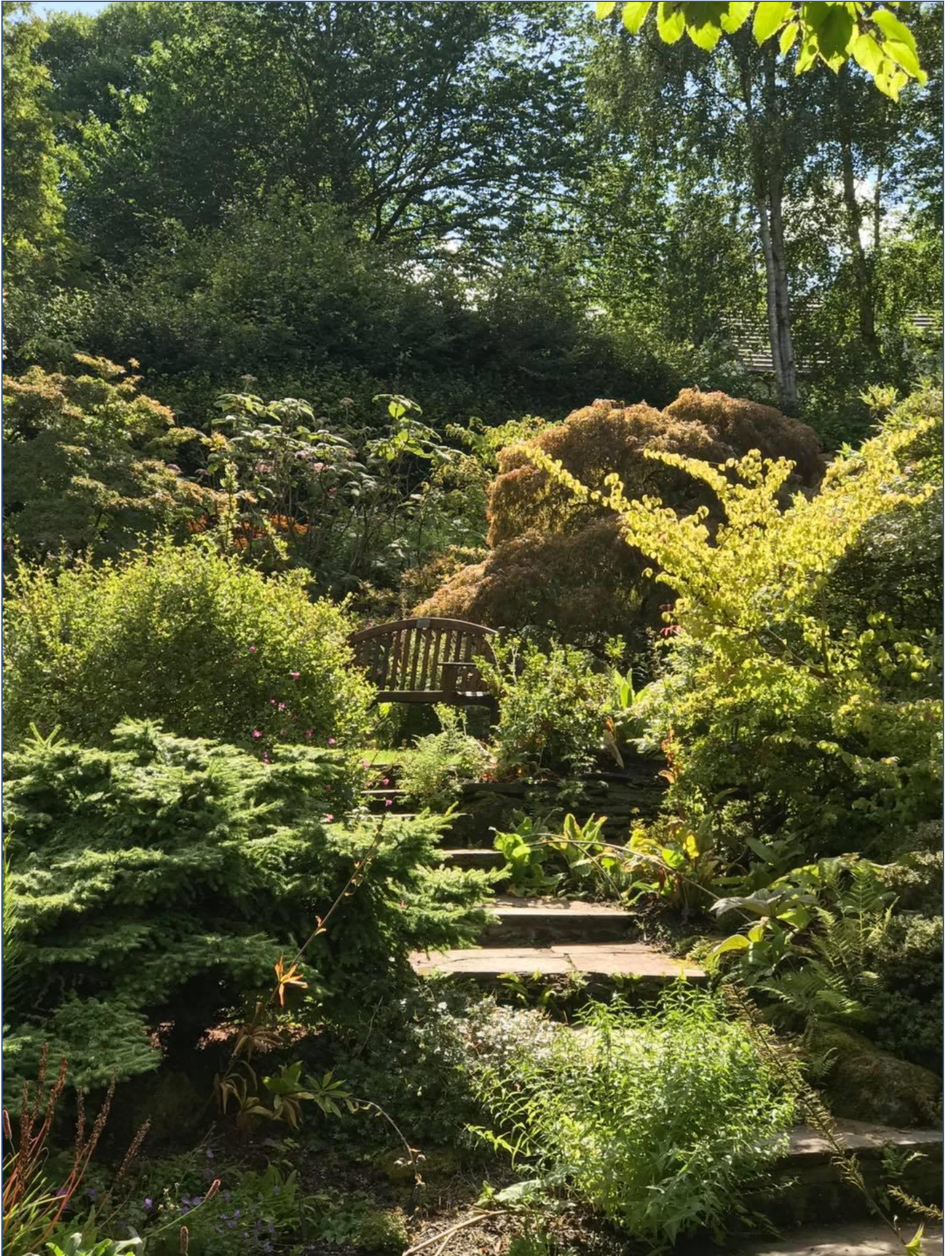


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Now for some views of Branklyn Garden .....all photos by Jim Jermyn.





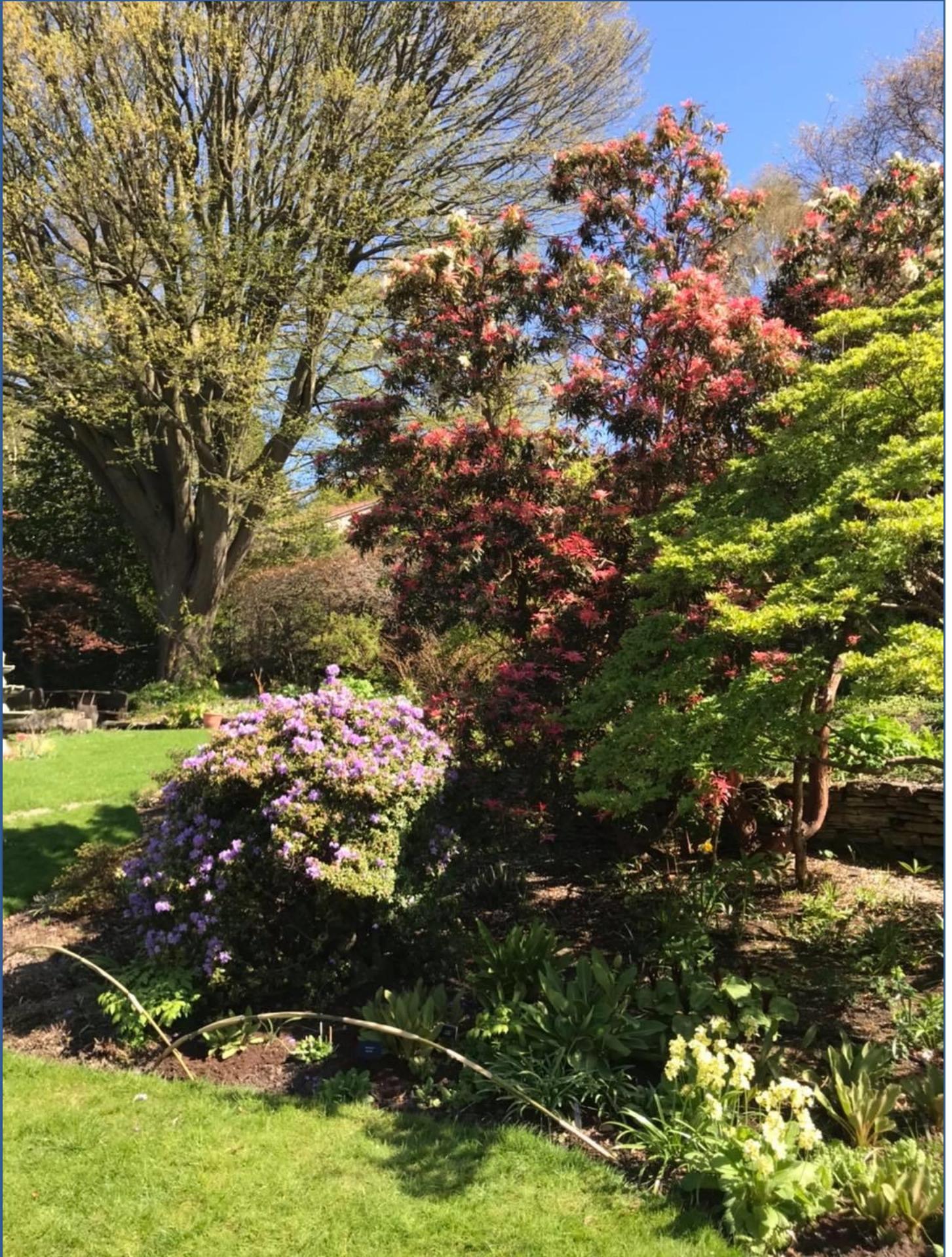




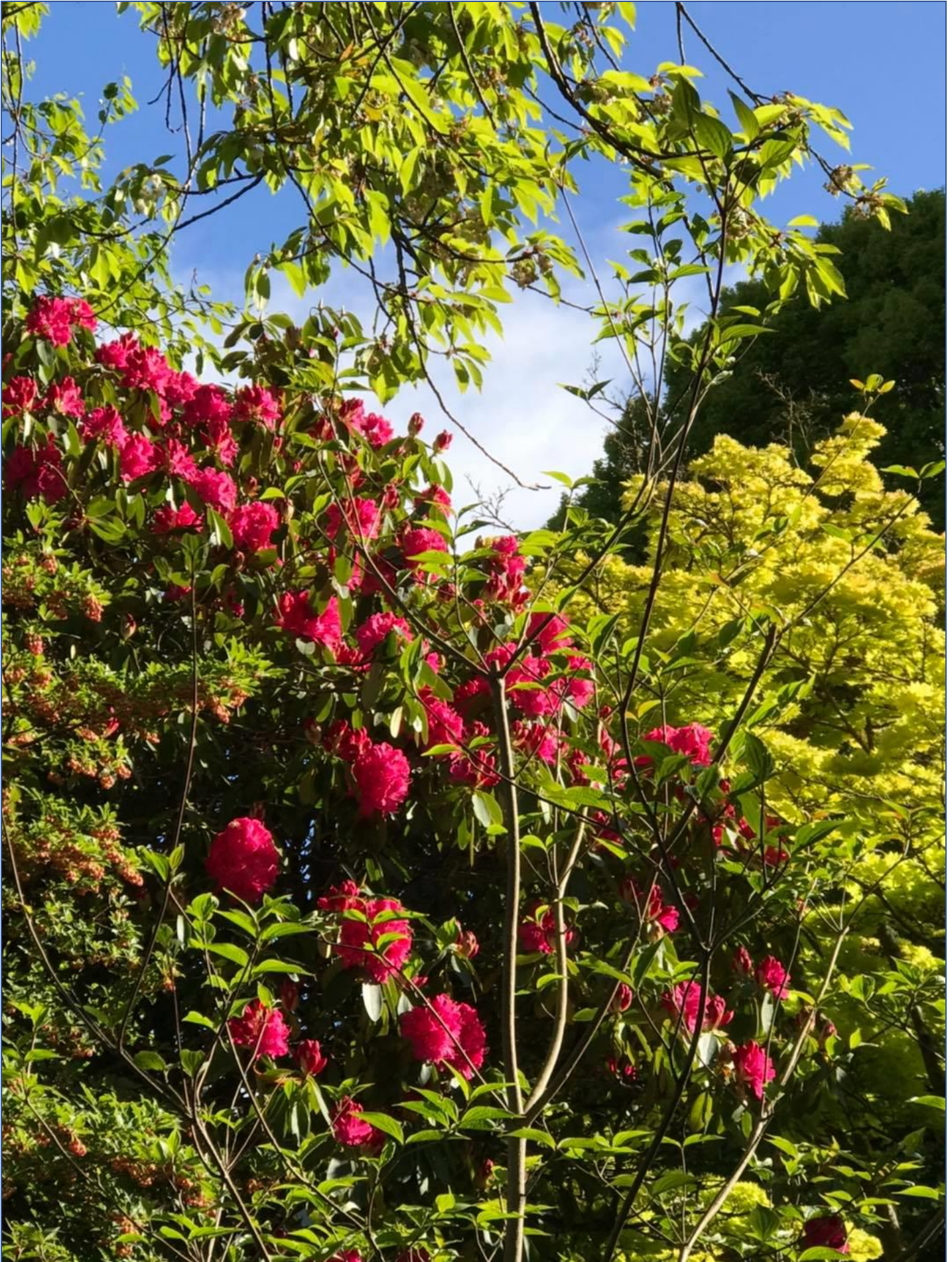
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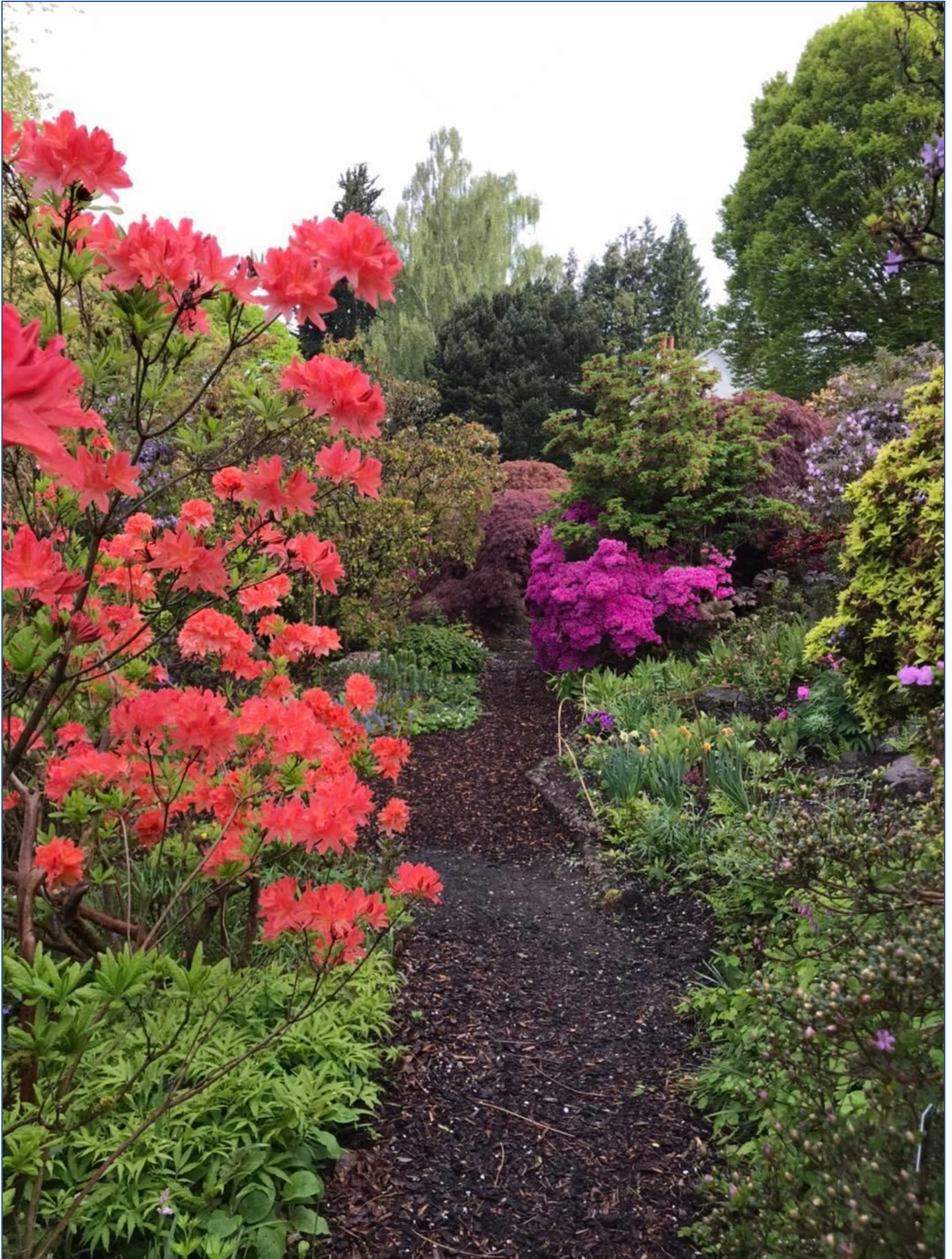




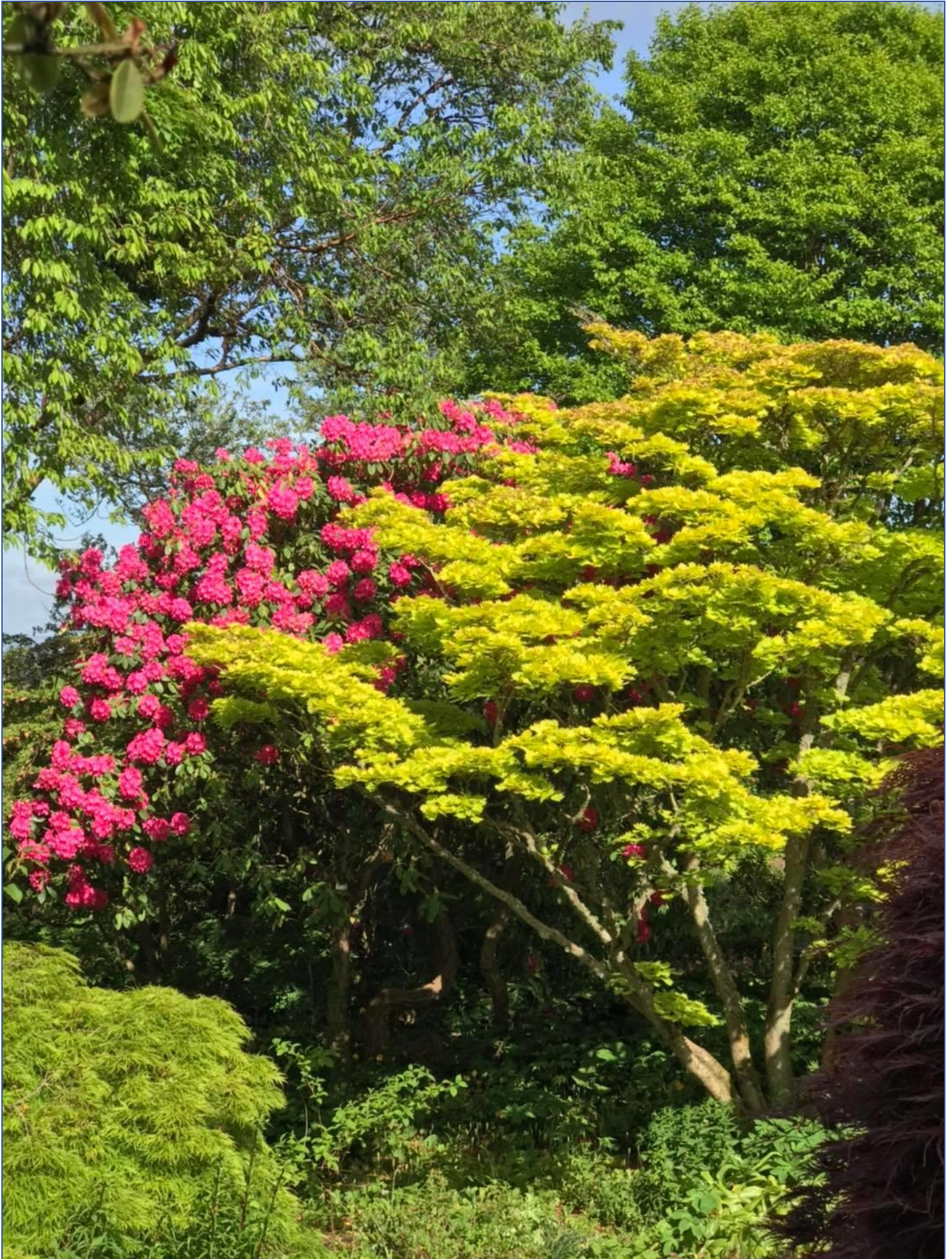






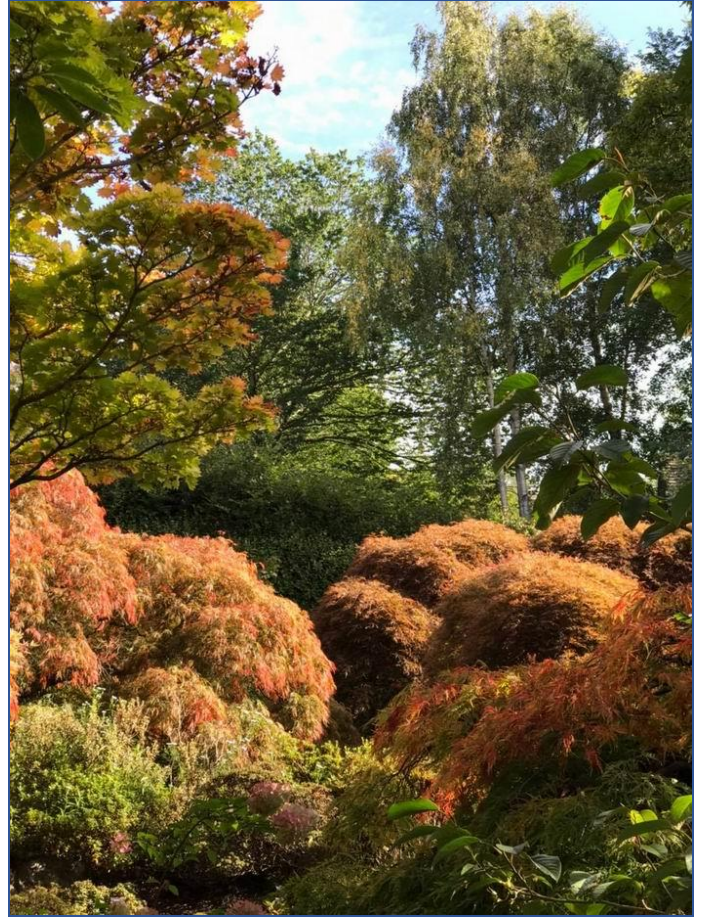








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*Gentiana 'Krumrey'*



*Primula whitei*



*Erythronium 'Rosalind'*



*Pleione limprichtii*



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*Dianthus 'Inshriach Dazzler'*



*Cassiope tetragona*



*Geum reptans*



# ---International Rock Gardener---



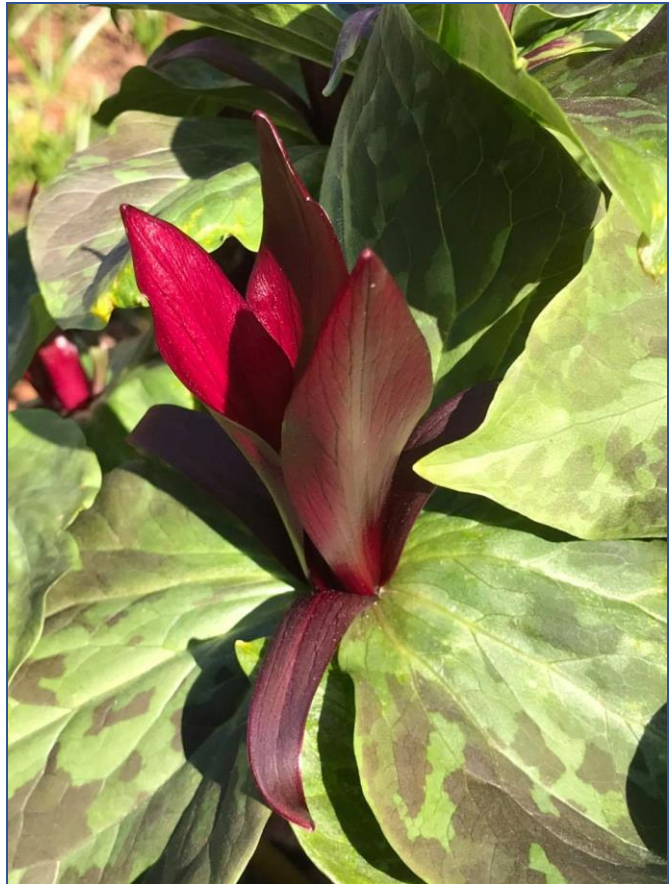
*Hepatica 'Millstream Merlin'*



*Crinodendron hookerianum*



*Trillium flexipes*



*Trillium kurabayashii*



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*Rhododendron edgeworthii*



*Rhododendron arboreum* 'Tony Schilling'



*Oxalis* 'Ute'



*Cypripedium flavum*



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*Cardiocrinum giganteum* var. *yunnanense*



*Paeonia mlokosewitschii*



*Nomocharis aperta*



*Lilium mackliniae*





*Lilium monodelphum*



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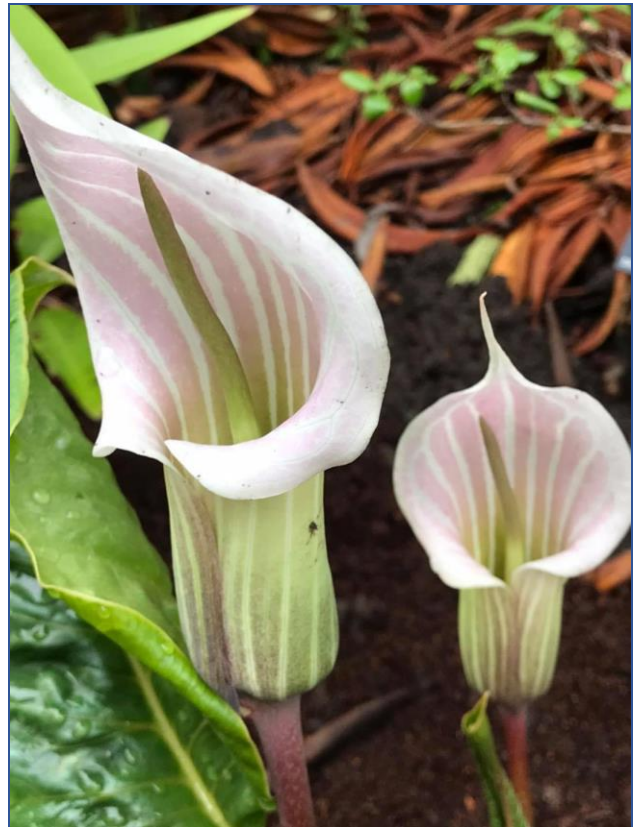
*Primula flaccida*



*Primula secundiflora*



*Primula sikkimensis*



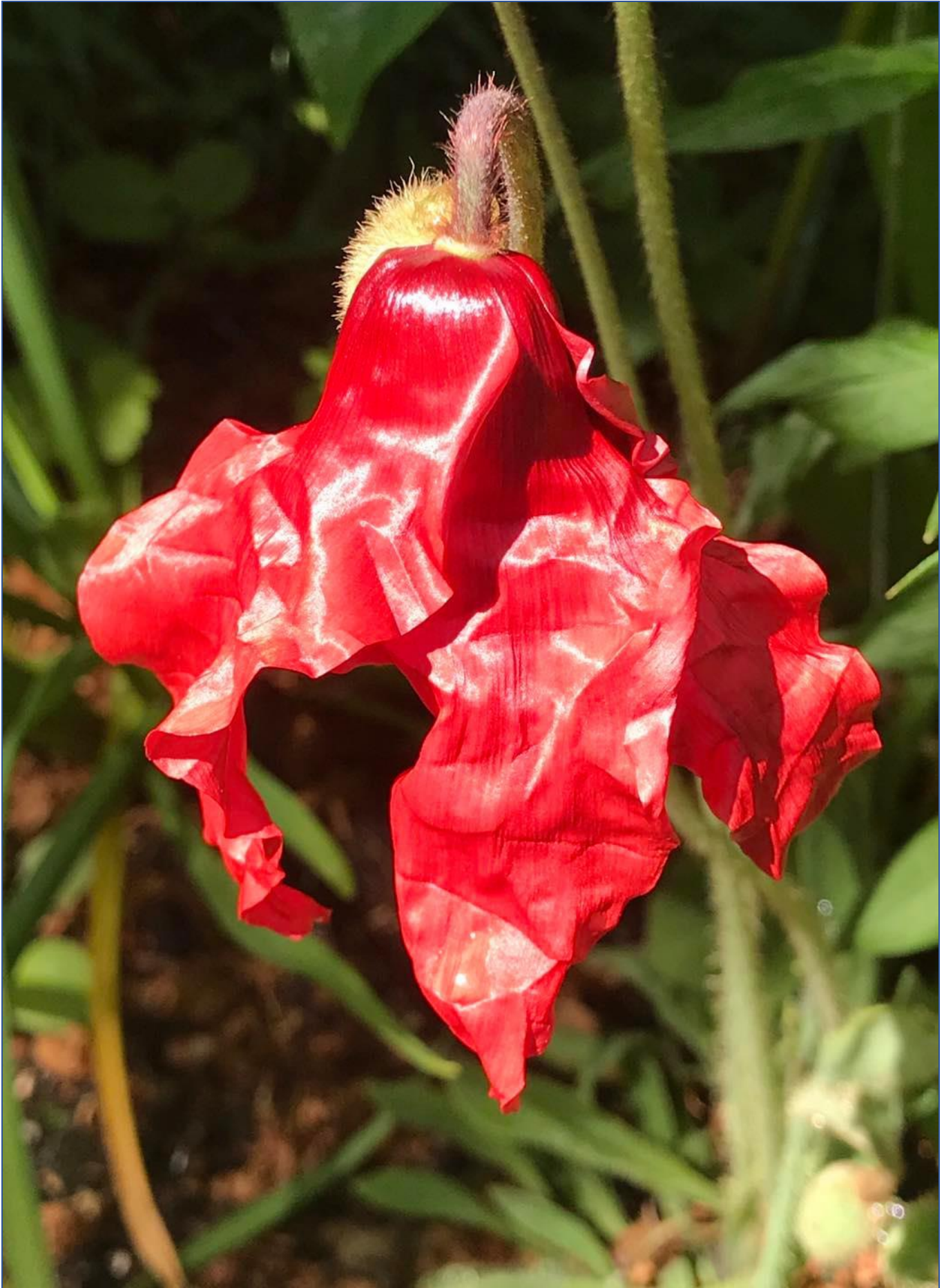
*Arisaema candidissimum*





*Meconopsis* 'Dorothy Renton'





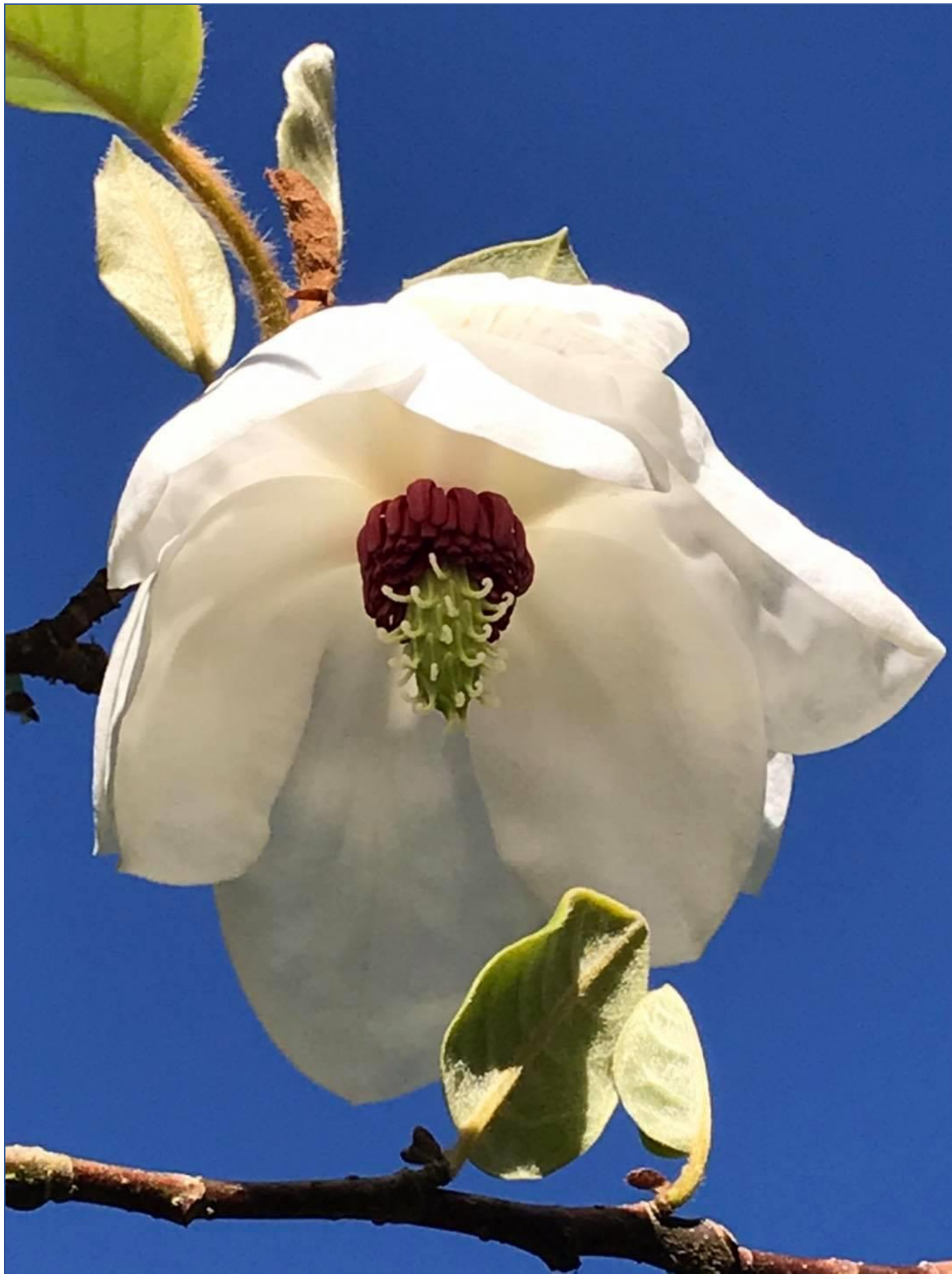
*Meconopsis punicea*





*Meconopsis* ['Cruickshank'](#)

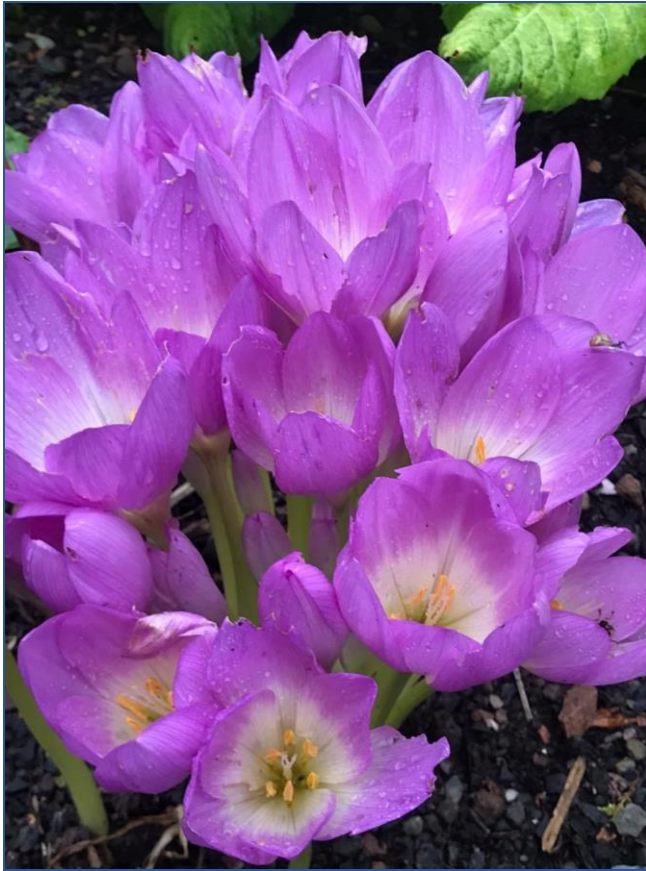




*Magnolia wilsonii*



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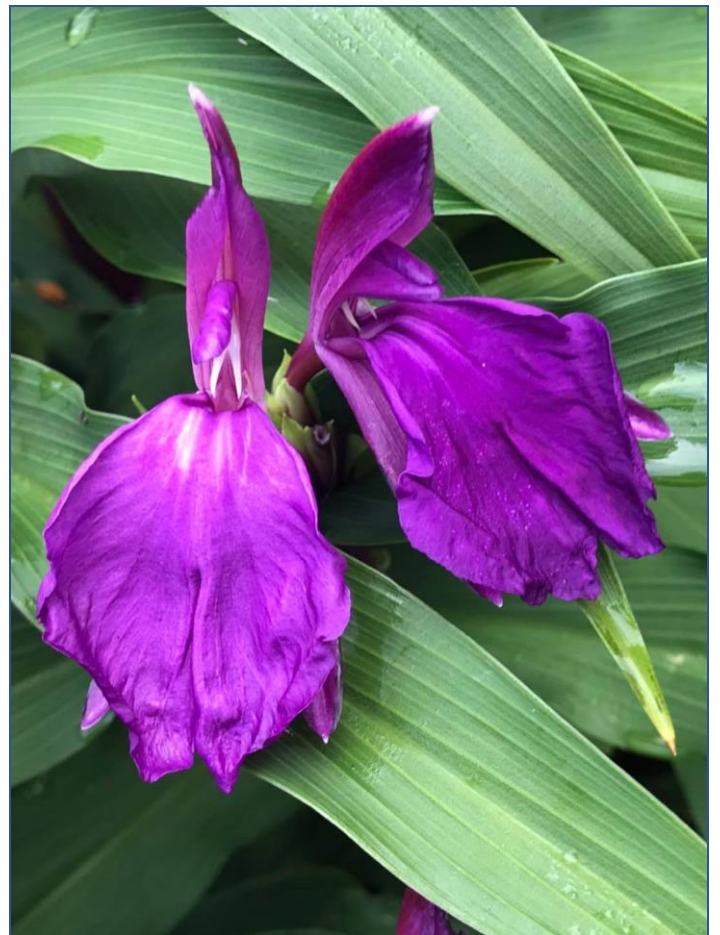
*Colchicum 'Rosy Dawn'*



*Gentiana 'Strathmore'*

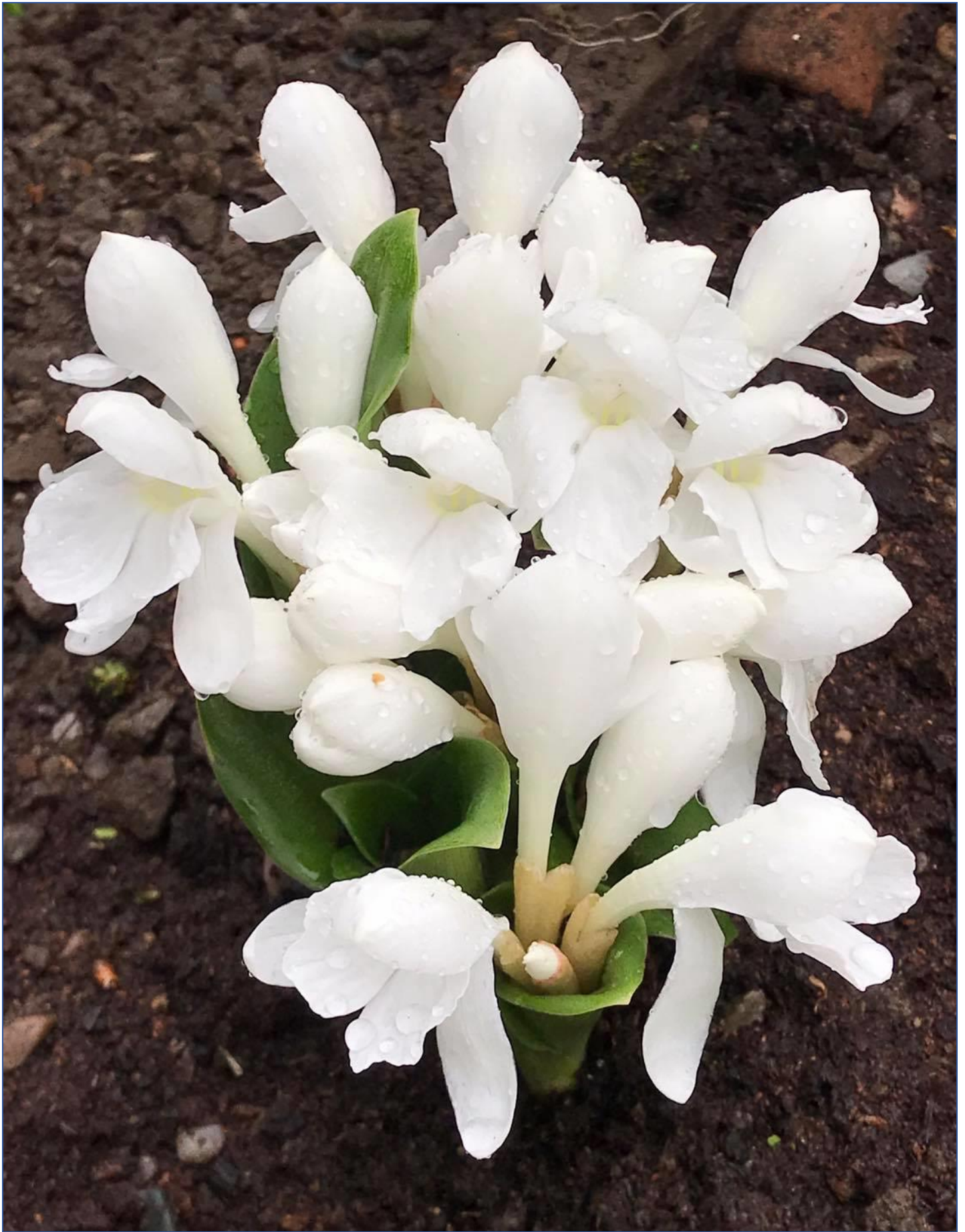


*Gentiana 'The Caley'*



*Roscoea purpurea 'Royal Purple'*





*Roscoeas 'Snowy Owl'*





Golden leaves in Autumn - *Nyssa sylvatica*, foreground, *Lindera obtusiloba*, behind.





Falling leaves from red Acers





Deliciously scented leaf of *Disanthus cercidifolius*



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Branklyn Garden reopens in April 2021 – you are most welcome to visit!

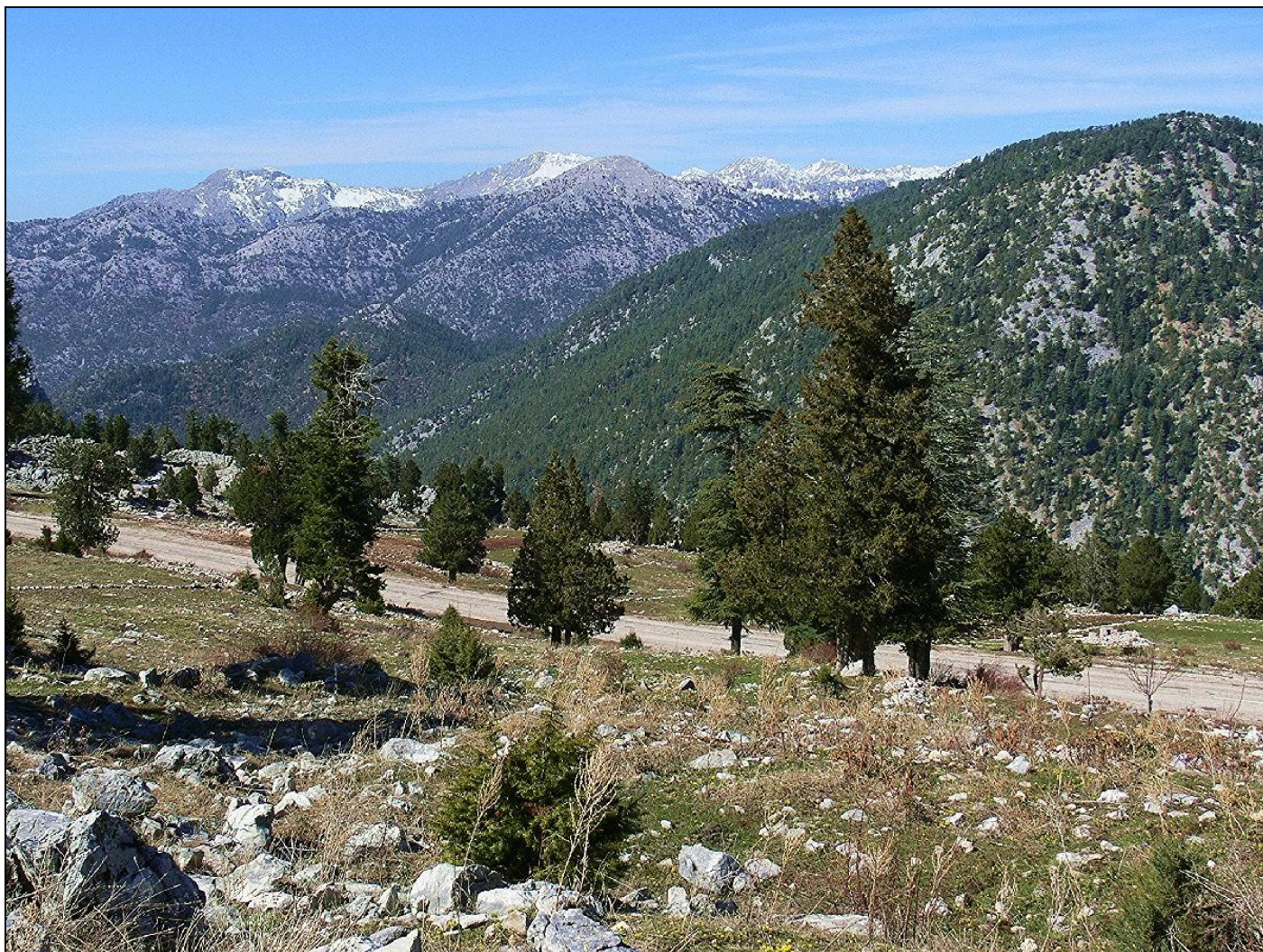


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## --- In the Mountains ---

### **Peeking into paradise By Zdeněk Zvolánek, photos Václav Jošt and Kris De Raeymaeker**

Paradise should be written in silk. It will not be a biblical paradise, where the only inspiration is a naked Eve with the figure of a plump Venus of Dolní Věstonice, but a botanical paradise, which the Great Spirit sometimes manages to place and plant when he has the desire to garden. Václav Jošt and Jánis Rukšáns located an appropriate spot in the Taurus Mountains of Turkish Anatolia east of Akseki at an altitude of 1200 m. The place known as Gembos Yayla (Yaila) is ideal for summer mountain cattle grazing; in winter the place would be ideal for cross-country skiing, but Turkish shepherds probably don't want cross-country skiing.



Gembos Yayla (Yaila) 1200m

The terrain photographed by explorer Jošt is a steep slope with mountain meadows timbered and partitioned by limestone outcrops inserted into an open forest of juniper and Cupressus. The ridges of the Taurus make a well-formed background. The local flower dances start at the beginning of March with snow melting and the wet meadows rejoice with snowdrops, Eranthis, Corydalis and Scillas.

*Eranthis with Crocus mawii*





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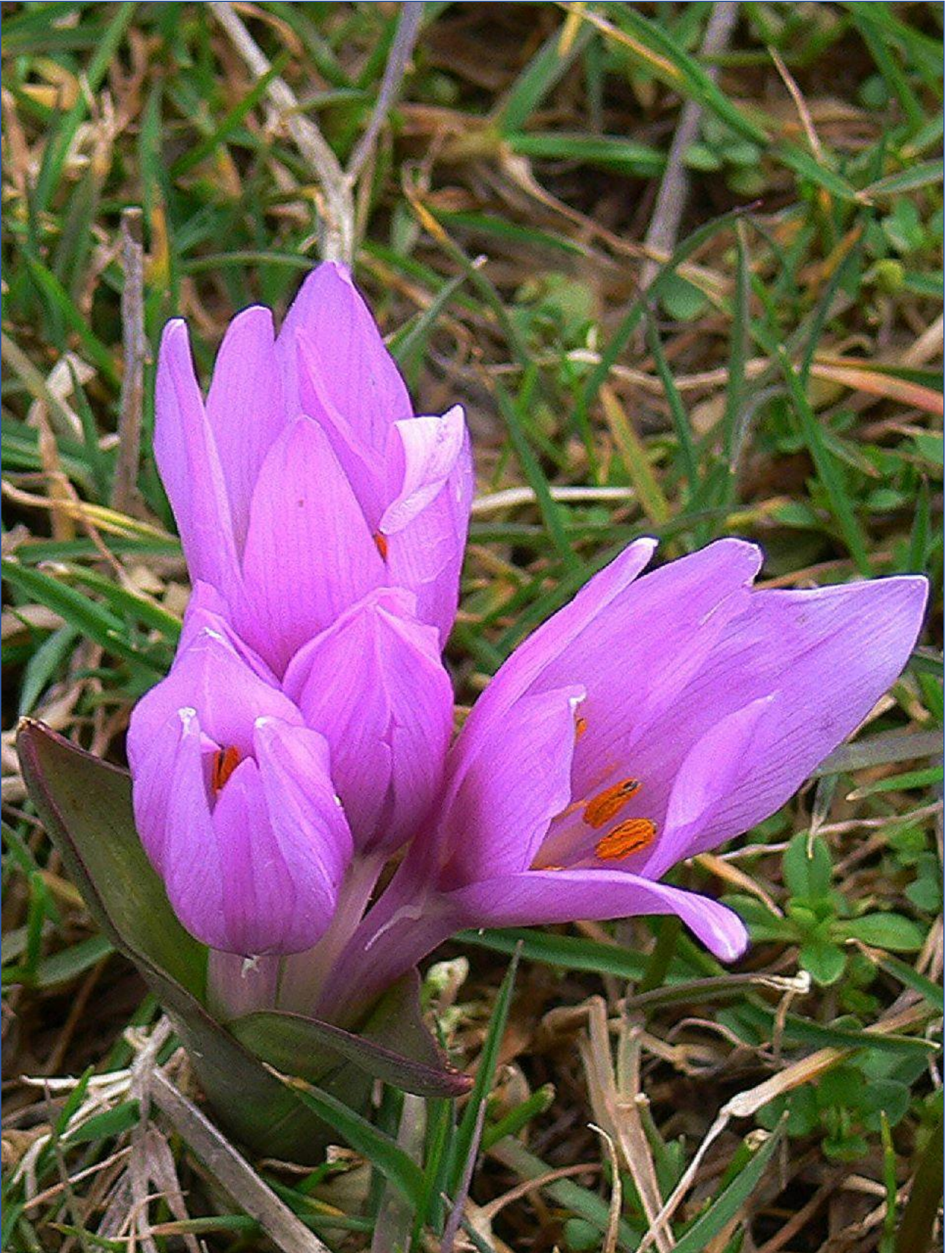


*Eranthis cilicica*



*Galanthus elwesii* and *Scilla bifolia*





*Colchicum (Merendera) szovitsii* subsp. *szovitsii*



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The heartbreaker in the last stitch of spring is the chubby pink *Merendera szovitsii*, today pushed between the spring Colchicums as *Colchicum szovitsii* subsp. *szovitsii*. This *Merendera* is scattered throughout Turkey and is very variable (dwarf, white, multi-leaved, etc.). The one selected here by Master Jošt is one of the most beautiful clones.



*Colchicum (Merendera) szovitsii* subsp. *szovitsii*



*Colchicum (Merendera) szovitsii* subsp. *szovitsii* – paler form



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*Crocus mawii*



*Crocus gembosii* - living in the side of the road in an asphalt bed, demonstrating its easy nature!



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*Crocus gembosii* - hybrids



*Crocus gembosii* 'Sunspot' –photo Kris de Raeymaeker



The main attraction of this pocket paradise is the glorious mating of spring crocuses, which has no wide competition in the world. Two species are here in an endless wedding dance: the yellow [recently described](#) *Crocus gembosii* and the bluish *Crocus mawii*. Unique in this nirvana of natural uncontrolled crossing are fertile hybrids (with fertile seeds) and the endless process of creating new colour combinations. We know that an excellent cultivar called *Crocus chrysanthus* 'Sunspot' (propagated by the British company [Pottertons Nursery](#)) was created in this locality with prominent black stigmas unable to self-pollinate but able to give birth to nice other hybrids with a suitable partner. After Latvian Jānis Rukšāns promoted the local divine *Crocus chrysanthus* to a new species of *Crocus gembosii*, it is necessary to write *C. gembosii* 'Sunspot'.





Václav Jošt in the Turkish spring



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*Crocus gembosii*



*Crocus gembosii* 'Golden Delight'



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The right paradise is polarized, offering different places. The one in Gembos has the upper meadows at the snow slopes, i.e. properly wet in spring, and the yellow *C. gembosii* loves the area. *Crocus mawii*, on the other hand, avoids a wet bed and grows on the lower drier slopes. Where the two species meet, most hybrids are in the adorable sugar shades of vanilla, yellow-white, gingerbread, and blue with feathering. *C. gembosii* itself is also painted in various ways, from pure yellow to chocolate-striped yellow on the outside. Václav Jošt spreads his yellow selection, for example, in [the Netherlands](#) and [UK](#), as the cultivar 'Golden Delight' (golden pleasure - zlaté potěšení) and people are amazed at how this yellow throws dazzling golden photons around them. Rukšáns considers *Crocus gembosii* to be easy to grow, gardener Jošt classifies it as completely undemanding and as evidence see his picture with this crocus living in the side of the road in an asphalt bed.

The multiplication factor is good. Phenological flowering dates are as follows: year 2018 - January 31, 2019 - February 28, 2020 - beginning January 17 and full bloom February 9. Jošt used to rank *Crocus alatavicus* and *Crocus korolkowii* among its earliest, but these now bloom later than the newly introduced *Crocus gembosii*. So here we have a new earliest species for rock gardens.

Civilization is a hungry sleigh that does not respect paradise and transforms intimate places into social places. There are reports that Gembos is now being scheduled for recreational purposes, so our peek into this paradise is probably the last.



Václav Jošt is regarded as the Czech cyclamen master – and was awarded the Karel Capek Award in February 2020.