



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

ISSN 2514-6114

Pictures and text © Ian Young

BULB LOG 27.....7th July 2021



Inspiration



Aegopodium podagaria

It was my boyhood interest in nature and wild plants that first lead me into gardening and that call of the wild is still strong and I am constantly learning and taking inspiration from nature. We are lucky to have wild areas within a ten minute walk of our home where I can find such wonderful spectacles as this mass planting of umbellifers.



To the casual glance they look the same and while the mass of the flowers are *Aegopodium*, on checking the foliage and stems I find the area is dotted with a number of other genera including *Aegopodium podagaria*, *Heracleum sphondylium*, *Myrrhis odorata* and *Anthriscus sylvestris* - or to give them their common names Ground Elder (or Bishop Weed in Scotland), Hogweed, Sweet Cicely and Cow Parsley.



As if the foamy white sea of *Aegopodium podagria* were not enough of a spectacle, nature lifts the scene both literally and aesthetically with a stand of ***Heracleum sphondylium*** rising up like a forest displaying the typical form of the umbellifer flowers against the dark background.



Not far away I walk through a lush green wet site spotted by yellow buttercups, ***Ranunculus acris***, with spiky rushes growing in the low lying wettest area. I am not suggesting that we fill our small gardens with these plants, although if I had unlimited space I would love to have such plantings, but we can take inspiration by interpreting nature's mass planting styles using plant combinations more suitable to the size, climate and ground conditions of your garden.



When it becomes difficult for you to tell if these pictures were taken in the wild or in our garden then I am happy because that means that I am learning nature's way by creating planting combinations that grow in harmony providing a sequence of interest over as long a season as possible in our climate – this is the garden.



The plants we use range from those that are rare in cultivation to other that many consider weeds that should be eradicated or banished from gardens: I think we need to be more relaxed and find spaces for plants such as the beautiful *Cymbalaria muralis* in our gardens.



On my walks I pass this very boring front garden that is just all bare gravel but the *Cymbalaria muralis* has made its way from the wall to spread out across the gravel and what a beautiful sight it is. Nature shows that this is a great rock garden plant; yes it will spread out but it does not inhibit or prevent other plants in any way so ask yourself if this was a rarity just introduced from the Himalaya would you be in the queue to get hold of it? I would.



Cymbalaria muralis is, like all plants, fascinating – I always wonder how the seeds find their way into tiny cracks in the stone walls where some go on to grow in the harshest of conditions.

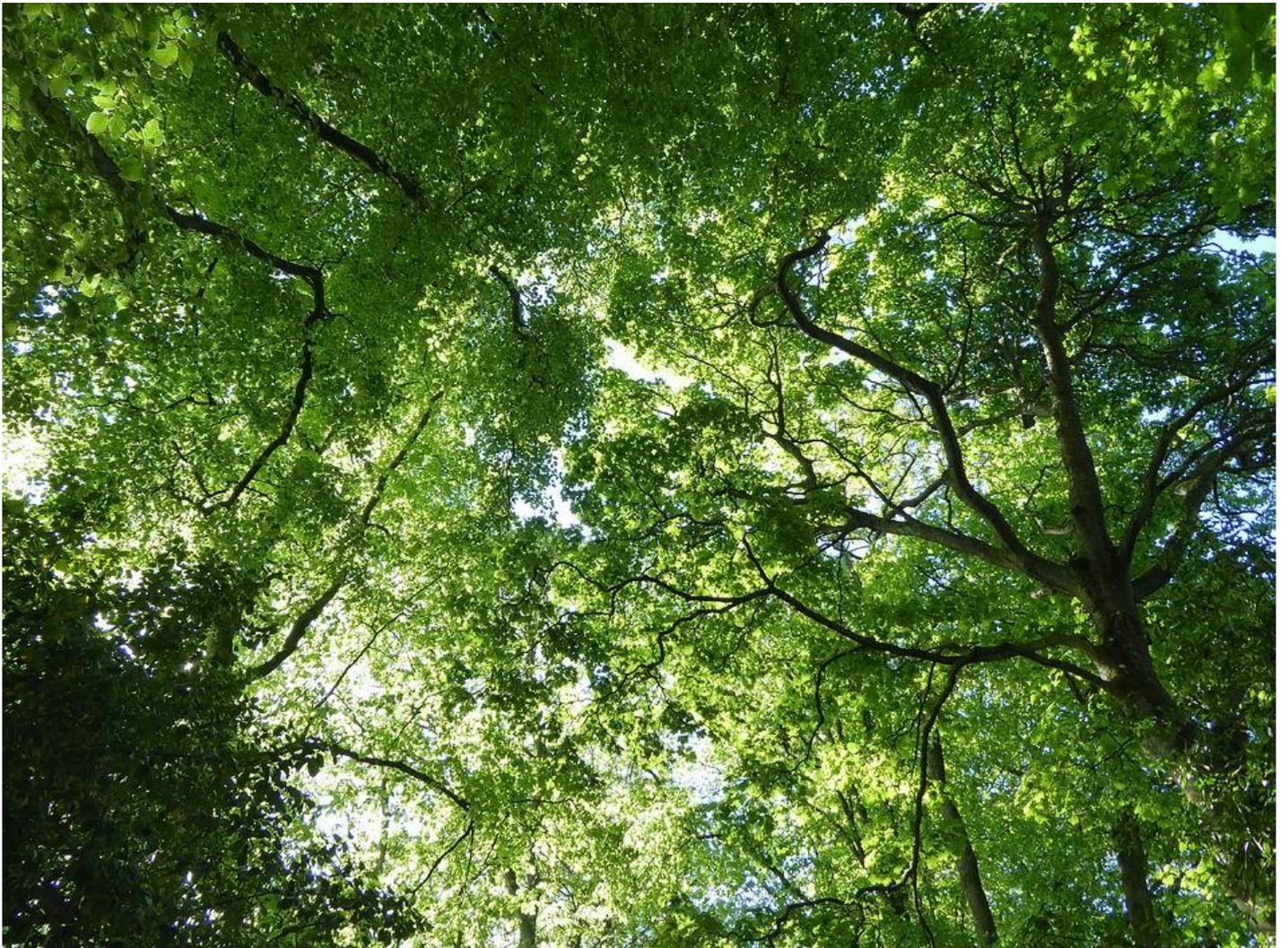
Once **Cymbalaria muralis** gets a foothold it will seek to find new opportunities by sending out stolons with the hope that the plantlets on their tips will find a favourable crack to lay down roots. There is such a rare plant introduced from the Himalaya that has evolved a very similar stoloniferous growth.



Saxifraga brunonensis, which is still relatively rare in cultivation, produces masses of these bright red stolons in the hope that some chance on a suitable place to grow - later in the summer it produces a sequence of small yellow flowers but it never produces a floral spectacle to compare with that of Cymbalaria. We even interpret nature in our troughs where we encourage plant communities to form to the extent that they can eventually completely cover the rocks that form the mini landscape.



Nature also plants containers – here in the foreground a rotted, hollow tree stump provides a place for plants to grow while above my head the tracery of branches rising to the leaf canopy provides yet more inspiration.

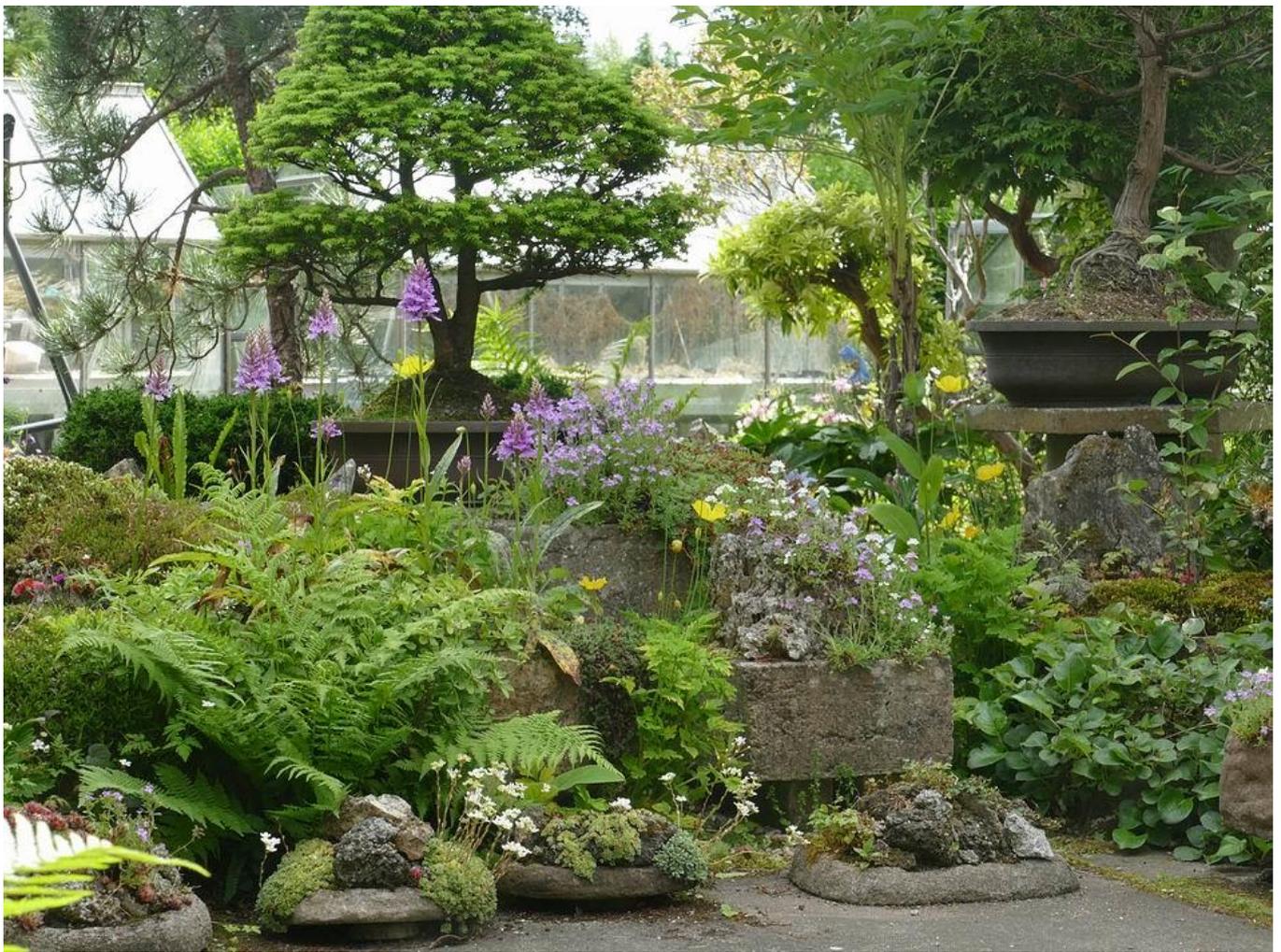




The garden is on a very different scale but I adopt nature's lessons from the trees down to the smallest of spaces.



A group of troughs form a small concrete landscape.



Bonsai and Troughs



While each trough or bed can be considered to be a separate habitat they all combine to become our garden.

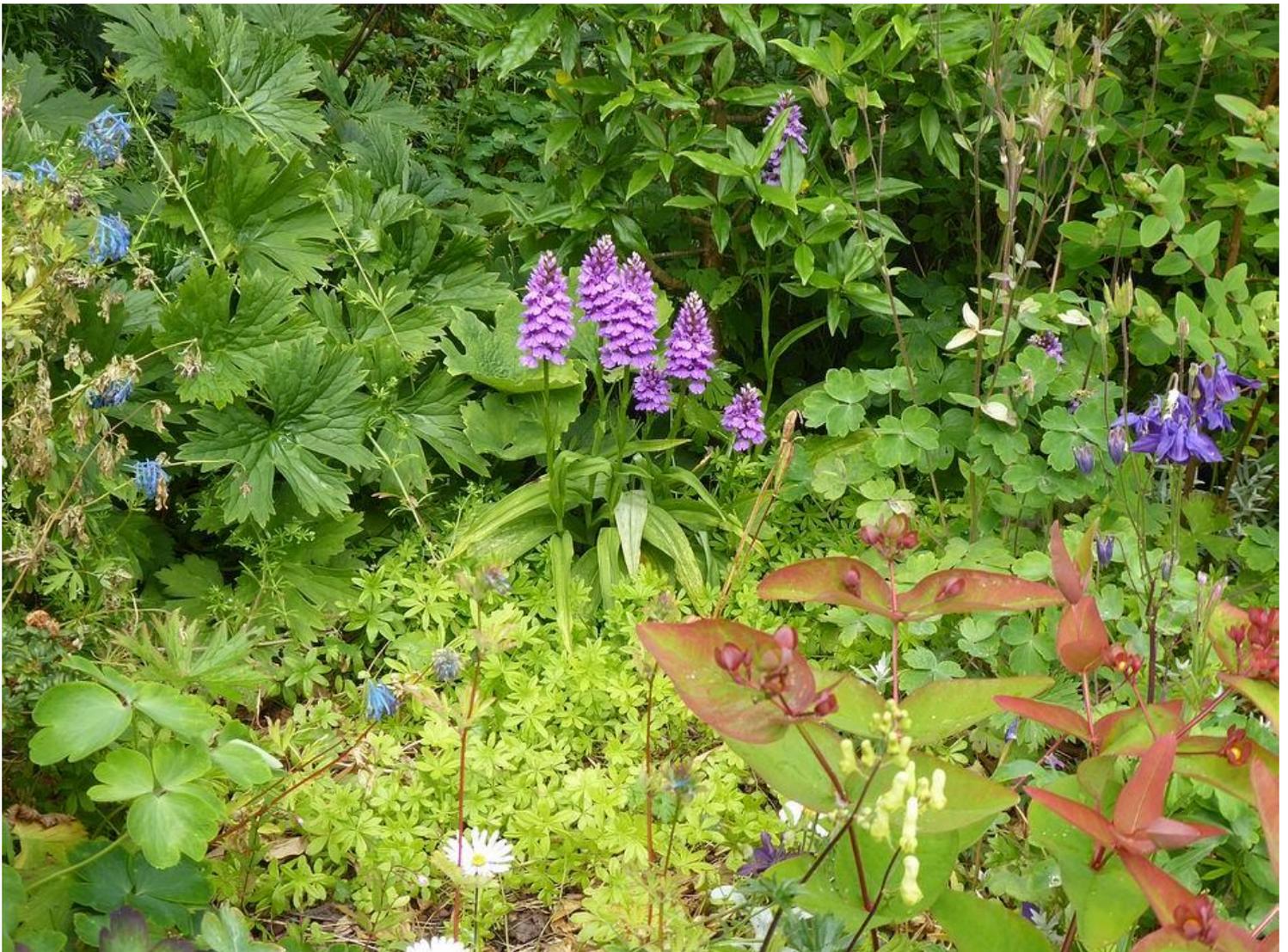


Eranthis alpinus



The upright spore bearing fronds rise up through the matt of **Blechnum penna marina**.

Over the last few years the *Dactylorhiza* have suffered from the bacterial/fungal diseases that turns the leaves, stems and tubers black but fortunately we have lots of healthy self-sown seedlings all around the garden and while some of the large clumps have succumbed we still have plenty in flower. Hopefully the natural selection of seedlings will result in a population that will evolve some resistance if not immunity to this black death.



It is often the *Dactylorhiza* growing within dense plant communities that are showing no signs of infection.



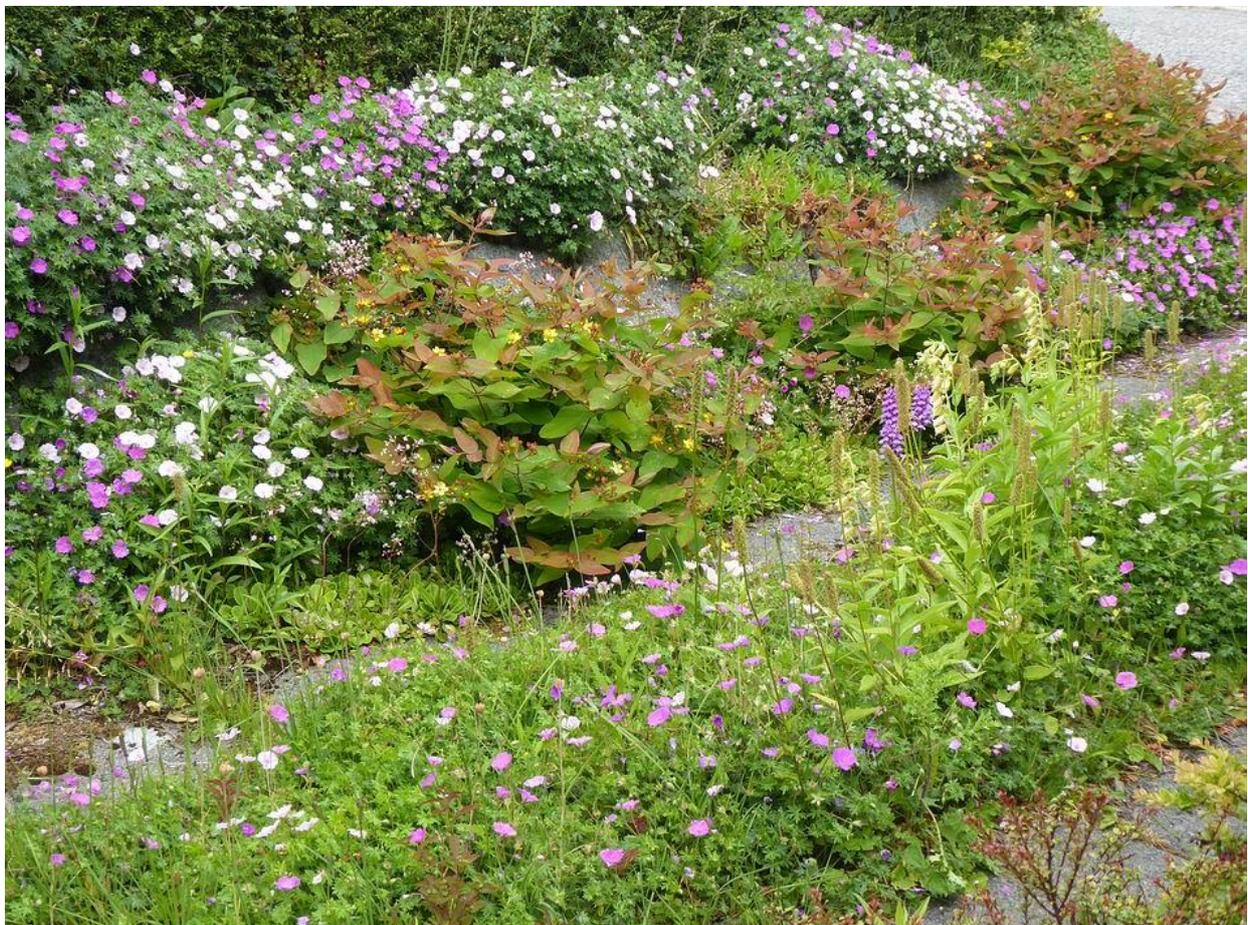
Back to the front garden where the driveways are entering another sequence as the *Phyteuma* pass the flowering baton over to the yellow *Digitalis grandiflora* and the multiple colours of *Geranium sanguineum*.



Over the years I have observed that the plants including *Geranium sanguineum* towards the street end of the drive always grow that bit bigger we also get most of the unwelcome invaders such grasses growing there so obviously there must be some form of nutrients as well as seed blowing or washing in off the street.



We did not plant these **Geranium sanguineum** growing on the top of the wall the seeds arrived there by the very efficient catapult style dispersal mechanism that the plant has evolved which can hurl the seeds some distance; they have even been thrown over the hedge and are growing in the neighbours' garden.



Drive way



I will finish off this week with a series of vignettes showing some of the plant combinations that are flowering - starting with a self-seeding colony of **Aquilegia saximontana** which has survived for many years by seeding around in the slab beds.



Aquilegia saximontana



Corydalis 'Craigton Blue'





Aconitum, Delphinium and Doronicum are among other summer flowering perennials growing in a bulb bed.





Corydalis, *Dactylorhiza* and *Meconopsis cambrica*



Corydalis mucronipetala and *Dactylorhiza*



Coming back to the Dactylorhiza, I believe the best way to ensure a healthy population is to encourage them to seed around, spreading out all across the garden and not to have them growing in a single large clump where infection can spread more easily. If you do have clumps it is wise to lift and divide them regularly. There is a three part series of videos showing me lifting, dividing and propagating Dactylorhiza on my

[YouTube channel](#) here is the link to [part one](#).





I leave you now with one last image of some *Dactylorhiza* that seeded into a raised bed.....