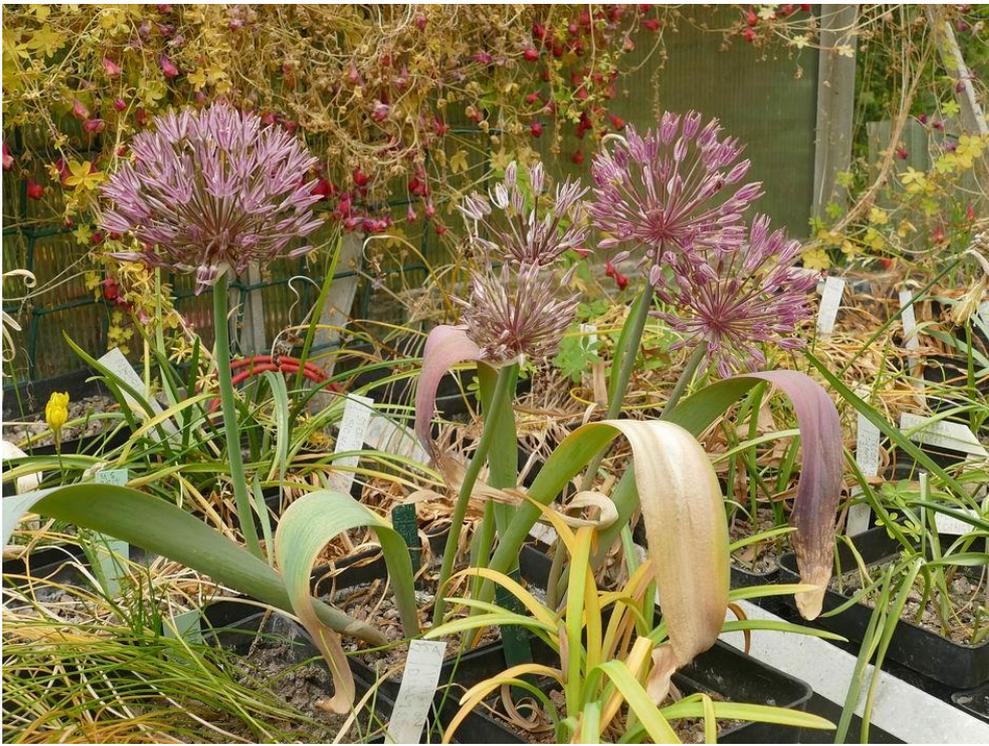




BULB LOG 22.....2nd June 2021



Allium nevsikianum



Allium nevs kianum

This plant was originally introduced by Jim Archibald but it came to us as a gift of seed, from an excellent grower and friend in Belgium, when it was easy and permitted to exchange seeds as well as plants between friends in Europe. Sadly such exchanges whether they are casual between friends or formal through organised Seed Exchanges look to be under threat from increasing regulations which makes me even more determined to get seed from as many of our plants as I can. Unfortunately this year it is as I feared, the cold weather we experienced has meant that despite my best efforts at pollinating the flowers we have virtually no seed

setting on any of the bulbs. The weather has taken a sudden turn for the better with a high pressure system finally delivering some very welcome sunshine and warmth to the garden although the east coast haar takes a while to burn off so we might not see the sunshine until lunch time.



Getting seed is important to ensure the future of the plants we grow and I am constantly irritated when I read or see people telling us to dead head our bulbs; supposedly so they can send all the energy into the bulb. My observations and the trials have proved that bulbs that set seed stay green, growing on for 4-6 weeks longer than they do if seed is not set, and this extra growing time more than makes up for any energy going into the seed: in fact in some of my trials the largest bulbs were those that set seed. So, dead heading your bulbs reduces the length of the growing season for your bulbs sending them into a premature dormancy and seed is nature's great free gift to gardeners; we should gratefully accept it. Because there is virtually no seed in the bulb houses the bulbs are going down early and are starting to look like hay meadows - I stopped watering at the first signs of the leaves yellowing.



Allium shelkovnikovii is another we received from the same source and I am so delighted to have these later flowers gracing the bulb houses. Although they flower later than most of the other bulbs we grow their leaves come into growth around the same time, so the leaves are often dying back by the time the flowers appear.



Allium shelkovnikovii

**Ornithogalum sp
ex Greece**

We have a number of Ornithogalum species from Greece and Turkey that have a similar growth pattern with their leaves coming quite early in the growing season so by the time the flowers appear they are often going back.



Ornithogalum sp ex Greece

This one flowers a bit later than the one I showed in the previous picture, which was taken two weeks ago, showing it still in tight bud –its progression to full flower is recorded in the next two pictures.

This week the first flowers started to open, then in the warmth of the sunshine, it burst into bloom as shown below.



The leaves of many of the bulbs we grow come into growth just before or after the flowers appear and I know, because I have sectioned bulbs, that they will have formed their flower buds at the end of the previous season's growth before they go underground for the summer. Now I am wondering if the Allium and Ornithogalum

follow the same pattern or because the leaves form long before the flowers emerge, do their flower buds wait all that time to appear or might they form earlier in the same season? If the bulbs behave the same way in nature then it cannot be efficient to be trying to make next year's flower buds at the same time as the current ones are in flower and when the yellowing leaves cannot be gathering maximum energy – I see more bulbs will have to be sectioned as I try and answer my question.



Ornithogalum sp ex Greece



The bulbs in the **'U' shaped sand bed** are also retreating back underground for the summer with the only seeds being on some *Hermodactylus tuberosus*, which are still green, while all the others around them have died back.



Still green *Hermodactylus tuberosus* with seed pods.



Most of the bulbs in the other bulb house sand bed are also in fast retreat now but there are still a few flowers and hopefully a few more to come in the summer as I seek bulbs to extend the flowering season for as long as possible.



Another **Ornithogalum** sp. - this one which is from Turkey, grows slightly taller.



Ornithogalum sp from Turkey



The very last of the Narcissus flowers are just hanging on as the Ornithogalum open.



Tropaeolum tricolor is not doing as well as it did in previous years because it is one of a number of plants that suffered in the very cold, -14C, conditions earlier in the year. I believe the roots may have been damaged by the deep frost which has prevented sufficient nutrients and water from reaching and supporting the growth.



All our plants of **Tropaeolum azureum** were similarly affected but a few have managed to go on and flower as we expect. I am reasonably confident the tubers will survive.



Allium and Ornithogalum flowers in the bulb house with Corydalis 'Craigton Purple' flowering beyond the glass.



There is a similar situation in the garden where the cold/wet spring weather severely hindered successful fertilisation resulting in the bulbs going into retreat earlier than in more fertile years.



The large plant right of centre is **Corydalis 'Craigton Purple'** the smaller similar looking plant to the left and slightly further back is a sister seedling that does not increase nearly as well as the form I selected to name.



I selected **Corydalis 'Craigton Purple'** as the best of a group of self-sown seedlings from *Corydalis capitata*.



On decorative values this sister *Corydalis capitata* hybrid seedling came close to being chosen but the seedling I eventually selected stood out on adaptability, vigour, ease of increase as well as decoration.



One of my favourite planting combinations with *Corydalis* 'Craigton Purple' is this one where the various *Dicentra* hybrids and ferns all share a variation on the theme of leaf form and colour.



Uvularia grandiflora and perfoliata are both self-seeding around in a few areas of the garden where they provide interest and colour just when the earlier flowering bulbs are going over.



We are gradually introducing the Uvularia to other areas in the garden where they will be also allowed to seed.



Uvularia perfoliata



Uvularia grandiflorum

Regular readers will be familiar with my pet Dandelion, **Taraxacum officinale**, which I always prevented from seeding by pulling the stems off as soon the flower started to shut - quite the opposite of what I generally encourage with the plants in the garden, however that has now changed.



Goldfinch, *Carduelis carduelis*, feeding on *Taraxacum officinale* seeds.

This year we have had a big increase in the population of Goldfinches, flocks of which visit the garden feeders several times a day: then I noticed they were also eating the Dandelion seeds, stripping them as soon as the flowers shut so I have been allowing the birds to control the plant I only intervene if they have missed any.



***Taraxacum officinale* or Dandelion**

Despite our efforts and control of that Dandelion there are plenty of them blowing in and occasionally they get up to flowering size before we spot them and how beautiful and variable the flowers are.





Rhododendron wardii var. puralbum

The rest of this week's pictures are of some more of the larger Rhododendrons that are flowering just now.



Rhododendron fortunei



Rhododendron fortunei



Rhododendron rex ssp. fictolacteum and Rhododendron bureavii

At first glance you may think this is one large plant but it is two large plants growing into each other.



Rhododendron rex ssp fictolacteum, left and Rhododendron bureavii, right.



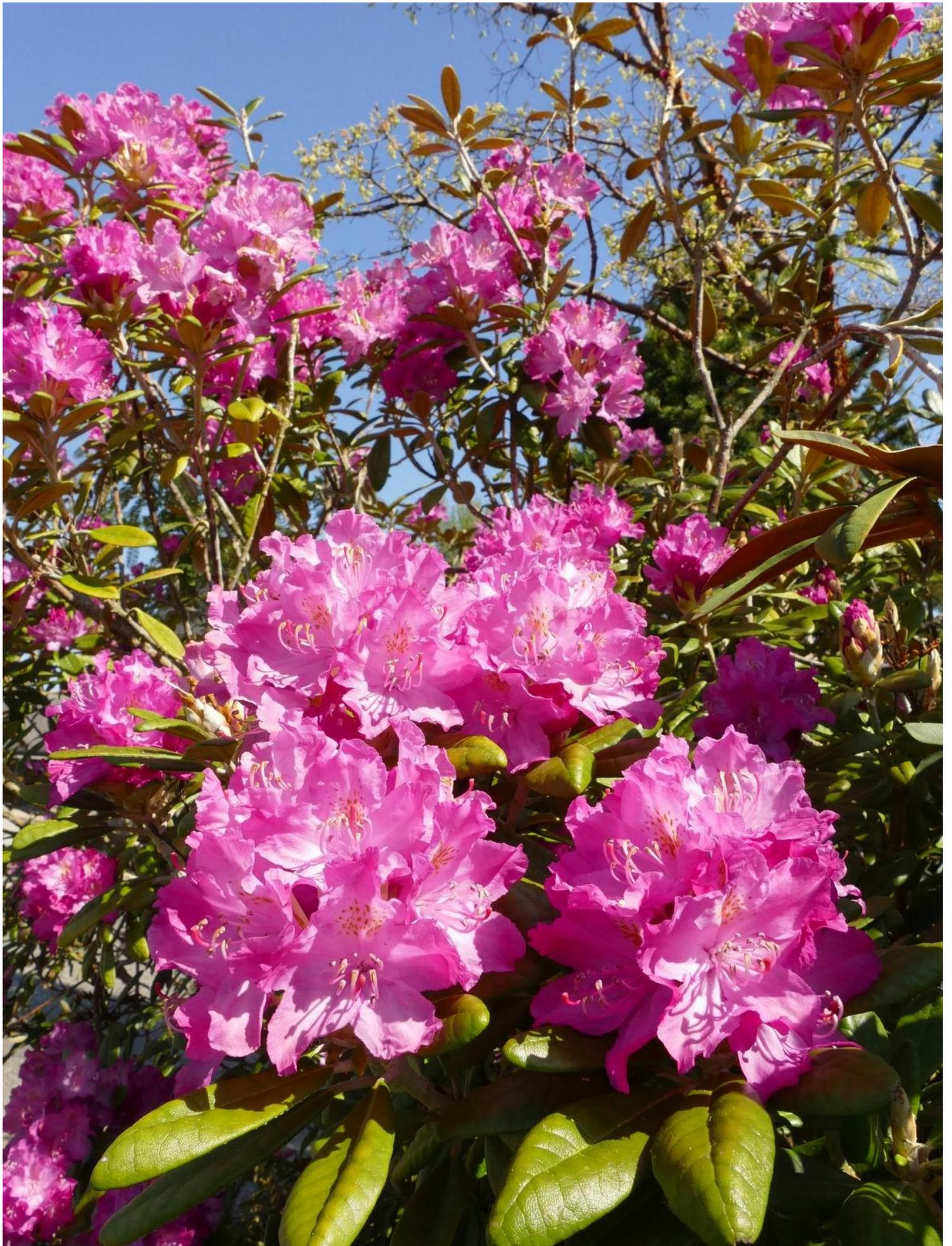
Rhododendron bureavii



Rhododendron bureavii



To give an impression of the size of this *Rhododendron bureavii* here it is growing in the front garden where it towers above the gutters on the roof.



Rhododendron smirnowii

I will leave you this week with an appeal: please do not dead head your bulbs.....