



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 21.....26th May 2021



Fritillaria affinis



The seasonal changes in the garden happen gradually with the early flowering plants giving way to those that flower a bit later but now, with the leaves emerging on the trees and the passing of the *Erythronium* flowers, all of a sudden the colours of the garden become more gentle, often merging together. The showy bright coloured flowers of the early bulbs that made such a bold statement rising up dramatically from almost bare winter ground now give way to ground covering foliage and the plants now have to rise up to display their flowers proudly above the emerging green tapestry.

This is well illustrated by the cover image where I show a

yellow flowered form of *Fritillaria affinis* which is only subtly different in tone and colour from the background foliage.



The ground covering foliage gets established just ahead of the full tree canopy developing and of course many of the early bulbs, that have just finished flowering, evolved in woodland habitats to take advantage of the open light before the tree leaves cast their shade on the ground.



In the more typical forms of **Fritillaria affinis** the yellow background colour is masked by varying degrees of brown which can lead to totally brown flowers, a colour that is totally absent in the yellow form shown in the previous pictures.



Fritillaria acmopetala and Fritillaria pontica

The same two colours, yellow and brown, are displayed in the flowers of *Fritillaria acmopetala* and *Fritillaria pontica* which are also growing in these beds.



Fritillaria pyrenaica

Fritillaria pyrenaica is also a good garden plant where the brown flowers tend to blend in rather than standing out against the background. It is however well worth seeking them out and looking up inside the flower where their full beauty is revealed.



Fritillaria pyrenaica

**Fritillaria
camschatensis**

There are many flowers in the garden around this time that have dark colours and perhaps none more so than *Fritillaria camschatensis*, which from some angles appears to be black but when the light passes through we can see they are a dark maroon.

These dark colours have obviously evolved as the best for attracting pollinators and it is mostly flies rather than bees that I have seen visiting them



When you look at the ***Fritillaria camschatensis*** flowers in detail you will see the petals have a series of ridges leading down to the centre.



We come across this dark colour again in a number of Trillium including some forms of **Trillium erectum**.

**Trillium erectum x
sulcatum hybrid**

With all the hybridisation that happens between the Trilliums in cultivation it is increasingly difficult to be sure of what names we should apply to them but I have decided that does not really matter to me as long as I can enjoy their variation and beauty.





Trillium erectum hybrid



Trillium erectum hybrid



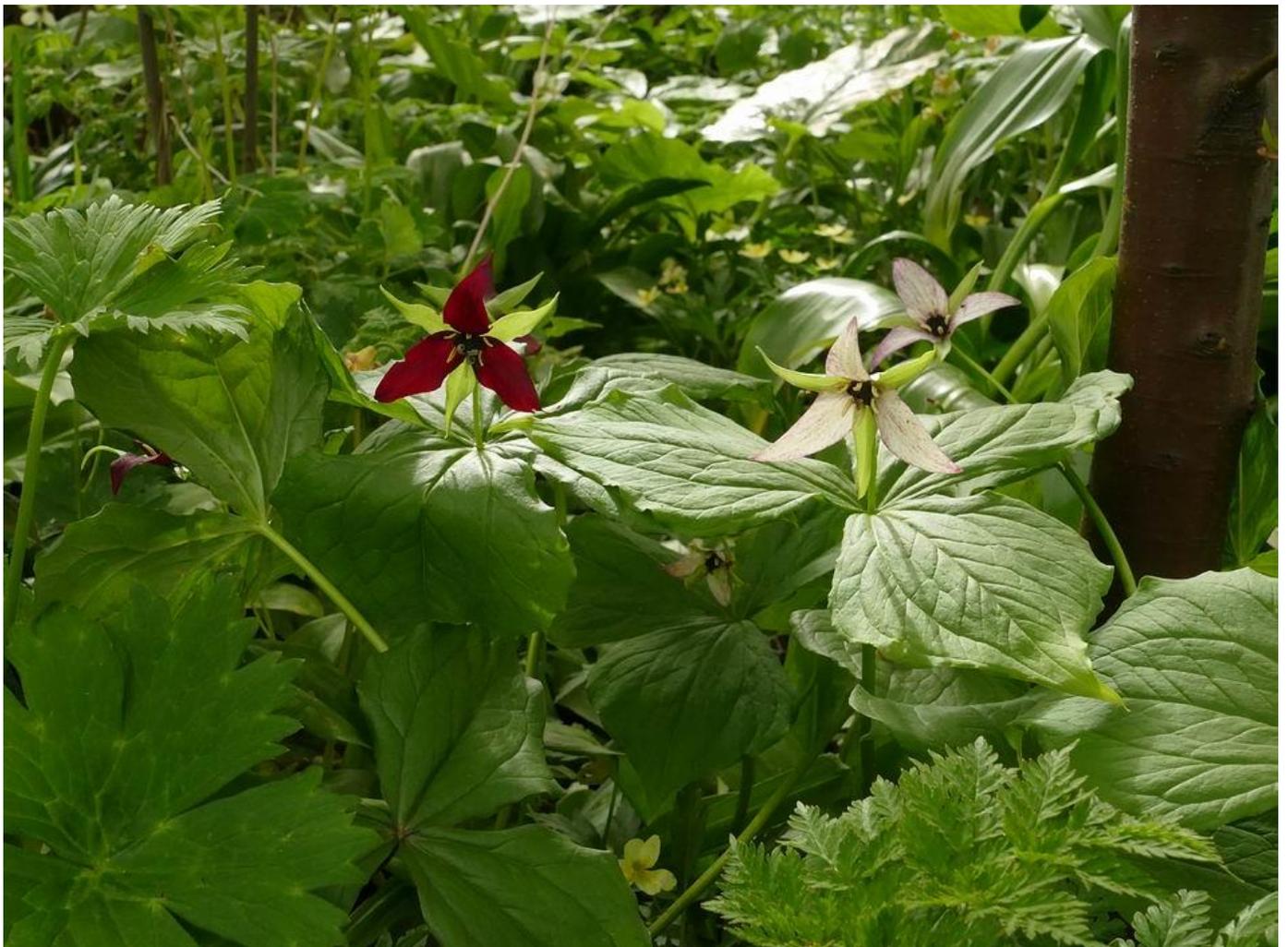
Trillium erectum and hybrids



Here the true **Trillium erectum** is growing happily in deep shade under a tree, Rhododendrons and a large tree peony.



Trillium erectum album



With our policy of allowing plants to self-seed we keep finding **Trillium erectum hybrids** appearing.



Trillium erectum hybrid



Bearing their leaves and flowers on the top of a stem makes Trilliums ideally suited to growing through ground covering plants which here merge to form a tapestry. Covering the ground with plants is both decorative and practical because it shades the ground, preserving moisture.



Trillium grandiflorum along with lilies and Arisaema are among many plants that will rise through and flower above the carpet of Dicentra.





This is also a great time of year to appreciate all the emerging foliage which unlike the flowers will be with us for months – even in this small area there are many shapes and forms.



Having said that flowers don't generally last long those of **(Pseudo)Trillium rivale** have been out and looking good since March.



(Pseudo)Trillium rivale and Trillium hibbersonii



Anemonella thalictroides



My preferred way of getting plants has always been to grow them from seed and with ever increasing levels of legislation being applied to sending seeds across borders it becomes more important than ever for all gardeners to conserve and preserve the plants that we grow in our gardens. I have been watching the seed pods on **Eranthis hyemalis** to open so that I can gather and spread some into other areas of the garden.



Just because we have allowed plants to self-seed for many years does not mean that I don't collect some seed to distribute directly into other areas or perhaps to grow on in the seed frames to be transplanted out later. Sowing seeds in a controlled way, such as in a pot or frame, can give a higher rate of germination because they are placed carefully into well prepared ground unlike those that sow themselves randomly with the chance that some seeds may 'fall on stony ground'. I do find that bulbous plants that self-seed will flower a year

before their counterpart in pots do.



Eranthis pinnatifida



Eranthis byunsanensis

I am constantly observing and learning from the plants we grow such as the different way that these related plants hold their seed capsules. The capsules of *Eranthis pinnatifida* are held erect while after flowering the stem of *Eranthis byunsanensis* does a 'U' turn to tuck the ripening capsules under the leaves.



Eranthis pinnatifida

In order to collect the seed of these rarer plants I have been watching carefully for the capsules opening.



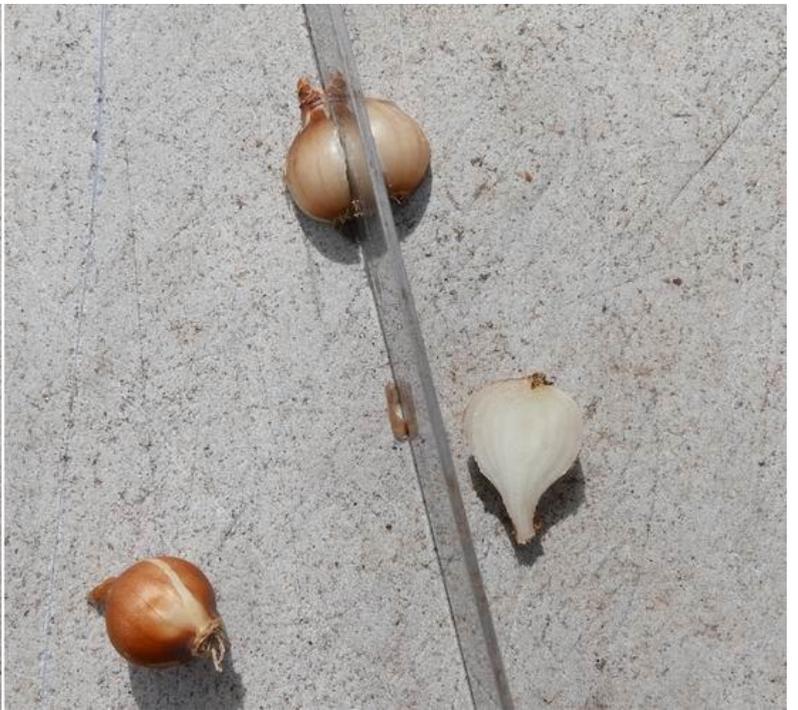
Eranthis pinnatifida

Not all the capsules had such a good harvest of seeds as above, one capsule had six, some had no seed at all.



***Eranthis pinnatifida* seed**

Looking carefully the seeds gives many clues about how and when to sow them - these seeds resemble tiny tubers so they should be sown immediately and kept moist until they germinate. Our experience is that the first single seed leaf will appear at the same time as the parent plants appear in January. All these seeds should help us in our attempts to build a sustainable colony of these beautiful rare plants in our garden.



There are other ways we can increase our plants and here I give an update on a tria I showed in [Bulb Log 4320](#) where I chopped some small Narcissus bulbs up with a kitchen knife and planted them directly into a regular potting compost.



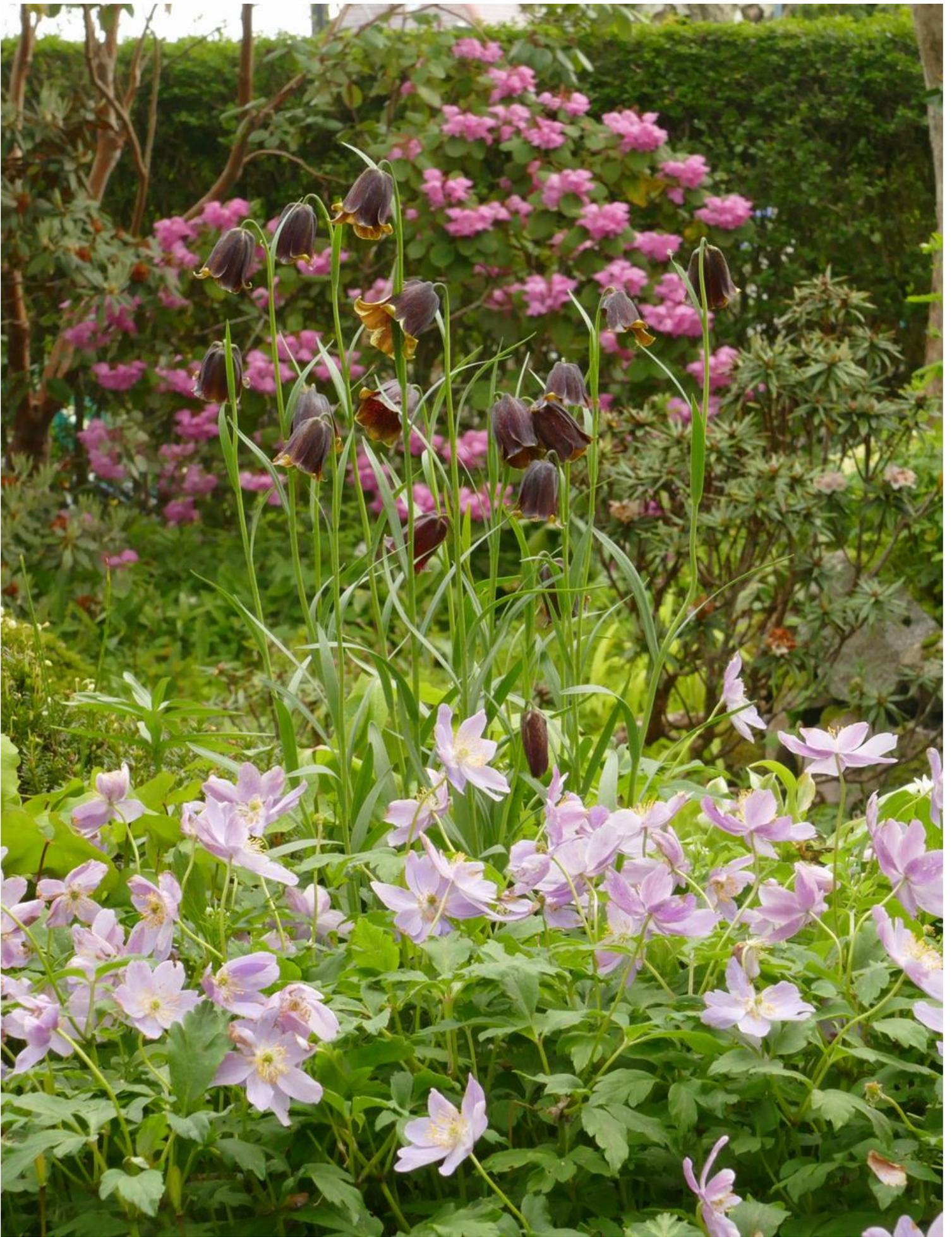
I find it much easier to get a single clean cut using a sharp knife rather than a scalpel or razor blade and I just cut the bulbs into segments making no attempt to split the scales such as when twin scaling.



To minimise the risk of rot setting in I did this at the end of August when the bulbs were just starting to grow.



I was encouraged when leaves appeared in the pot and now they are dormant I could not wait to tip the bulbs out to view the results. I think they speak for themselves: this is a simpler way for many beginners to start on the path of bulb propagation before they try trying twin scaling etc. There was no rot and all of the sections formed at least one, if not more, new bulbs - I will certainly be doing it again.



I will leave you with this image and a link to my latest [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#).....