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# Bulb Log Diary

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*Crocus puringii*



The autumn flowering Crocus season continues with more flowers appearing – we are often surprised by how many of these beauties there are across the garden. For much of the year they do not announce their presence in such a spectacular and attractive way when just their leaves, which appear in the spring, look similar to and merge with those of their spring flowering relatives.

As I stand looking down, taking in the beauty of this group of **Crocus speciosus**, their highly perfumed scent is rising up and filling my nostrils – with the combination of the scent and the visual display it is little wonder that they attract so many pollinators.



This is our darkest, best marked form of **Crocus speciosus** with the dark colour running some way down the tube making it a very attractive plant. Many years ago we got a few corms of this plant as a dark form of from the garden of our late friend Alistair McKelvie and it has gradually built up clumps by division as well as by seeding. It has been around for many years under the cultivar name ‘Aino’ and considered different to *C. speciosus* since at least 1983. After recent research and studies it has been described as **Crocus puringii**.



I especially like it when **Crocus speciosus** and other bulbs appear in combination with other plants such as the yellowing foliage of some of the smaller Roscoea species. This works because one plant, the crocus, is in flower now while the leaves of the Roscoea, which flowered in July, are displaying autumn colours as they retreat underground where they will stay until the new growth emerges next July. It is the colours that I can paint in the garden with different plant combinations throughout the year that appeals so much to me.



When you find such a plant combination it is worth repeating across the garden and here is another bed where compatible plants 'time share' with each taking advantage of the same space but at different times of the year. Among the Roscoea leaves you can see the flowers of a number of crocus species including the large white form of *Crocus speciosus*.



I am not sure if this is just a white form of *Crocus speciosus* or if it has some hybrid genes but it is a good vigorous garden plant increasing well and providing a welcome contrast in colour.



*Crocus speciosus* is a reliable species that seems to be compatible with most garden conditions

**Crocus banaticus**

Crocus banaticus is another reliable plant in our garden where it likes the cool moist ground conditions where it increases well by offsets corms forming around the parent as well as seeding.



**Crocus banaticus**



**Crocus banaticus**



**Crocus banaticus**

In this bed the foliage of earlier plants has already died back leaving the crocus flowers to come through bare ground which I do not find so aesthetically pleasing so I apply mulches. Over the year the mulch breaks down so as soon as I see the first signs of the crocus shoots I spread fresh mulch using the same pine needles forming a lovely russet red carpet. Fortunately pine trees shed their old needles at exactly the right time.

Finding suitable plant combinations is not always intentional; this happy arrangement of **Crocus pulchellus** flowers rising up through the foliage of **Celmisia walkeri** was a combination of a group of self-seeded Crocus from a nearby population being over grown by the spreading growth of the *Celmisia walkeri*. Sometimes the best thing a gardener can do is to stand back and observe as nature takes over –intervening only gently, where necessary.



While we initially introduced some structure and plants, most of the planting has now been taken over by nature. Here *Allium wallichii* is seeding around the foreground where *Erythronium* also run and the *Crocus* and *Celmisia*, shown above, can be seen in the middle right.



These **Crocus pulchellus** are growing through *Geranium sanguineum* in the front-drive, they are a bit battered by the weather but will still open when it warms up a bit.



Although the flowers of the autumn flowering bulbs can seem fleeting and fragile when I check my records they provide flower and colour in our garden for well over a month so when combined they are not so ephemeral.





All around the garden plants are in autumnal mode preparing for the winter and it is good to allow them to die back naturally appreciating the natural process as the foliage slowly changes colour before eventually collapsing; only then will I 'tidy' it up.



To prevent over seeding I cut back the stems of **Digitalis purpurea** to just below the faded flowers this initiates the secondary buds in the leaf axils to grow and now we have a smaller secondary flowering.



More flowers continue to open on the *Cyananthus* in the raised bed and that will continue until it gets too cold.



*Cyananthus lobatus* hybrid



Regular readers may remember that I have been trying to find plants that I can grow in the half of the raised bed currently covered by the mat of *Cyananthus*, particularly in the early part of the year before the *Cyananthus* gets going. I have been planting spring flowering bulbs but I also like the effect of this *Crocus banaticus* growing through the mat laid down by the *Cyananthus lobatus* hybrid so I will add more.



***Crocus speciosus***



Crocus are also flowering in the bulb house sand beds where their flowers are protected from the harshness of the weather.



**Crocus hybrid**



These hybrids can easily be mistaken for *Crocus pulchellus* (below) but the long length of the style is a good indicator that it may not be that species.



***Crocus pulchellus***



**Crocus xantholaimos** is the seed parent of the hybrids shown above and *Crocus pulchellus* could have provided the pollen - the hybrid flowers certainly appear to be intermediate between these two.



Crocus and Cyclamen are happy companions in the garden, this is mostly the winter flowering *Cyclamen coum*.



This is not a single clone of **Cyclamen hederifolium** but a group of seedlings planted out together which is always the best way to get good fertility with a plentiful seed set.



**Cyclamen hederifolium**



If you look carefully you will see the variation in the leaves between the different clones.



***Cyclamen hederifolium***





Talking of looking closely - walking by a bit later I spotted something black and white – a local cat was hiding under the *Uvularia* foliage, watching the ground below the bird feeder.



***Colchicum speciosum album*** will quickly make big clumps but I like to lift them regularly replanting them singly.



I will leave you this week with a Crocus flower and an usual pollinator to our garden, an interesting moth.....