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Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 37.....15th September 2021



Codonopsis grey-wilsonii



some late season colour.

At last we have had a night of serious rain when you could almost hear the plants sighing with relief as nature's watering injected life back into the garden. The rain will also cool the ground helping to stimulate more of the autumn flowering bulbs. The arrival of water has come a bit late for many plants that have suffered or whose growing season has been cut shorter by the drought while plants that come into growth and flower in autumn are growing a bit less vigorously this year; such as this *Codonopsis grey-wilsonii* growing up through a *Pieris* displaying



It is the colours of green that are dominant in the garden just now but when I explore I find there are plenty other colours and plants of interest to be found, showing that sometimes you have to look, and then you will see.



We include most Rhododendrons in the 'evergreen' shrubs but that does not mean their leaves last for ever: what it means is that the old leaves are not shed until sometime after the new ones have grown.



Now the new growth of the Rhododendron fortunei is well established, last year's leaves turn yellow, before dropping to the ground where they gradually create an autumnal tapestry which contrasts with still green Arisaema leaves – as you can see in this picture, rhododendron leaves can also turn red. Some Rhododendrons such as R. yakushimanum,

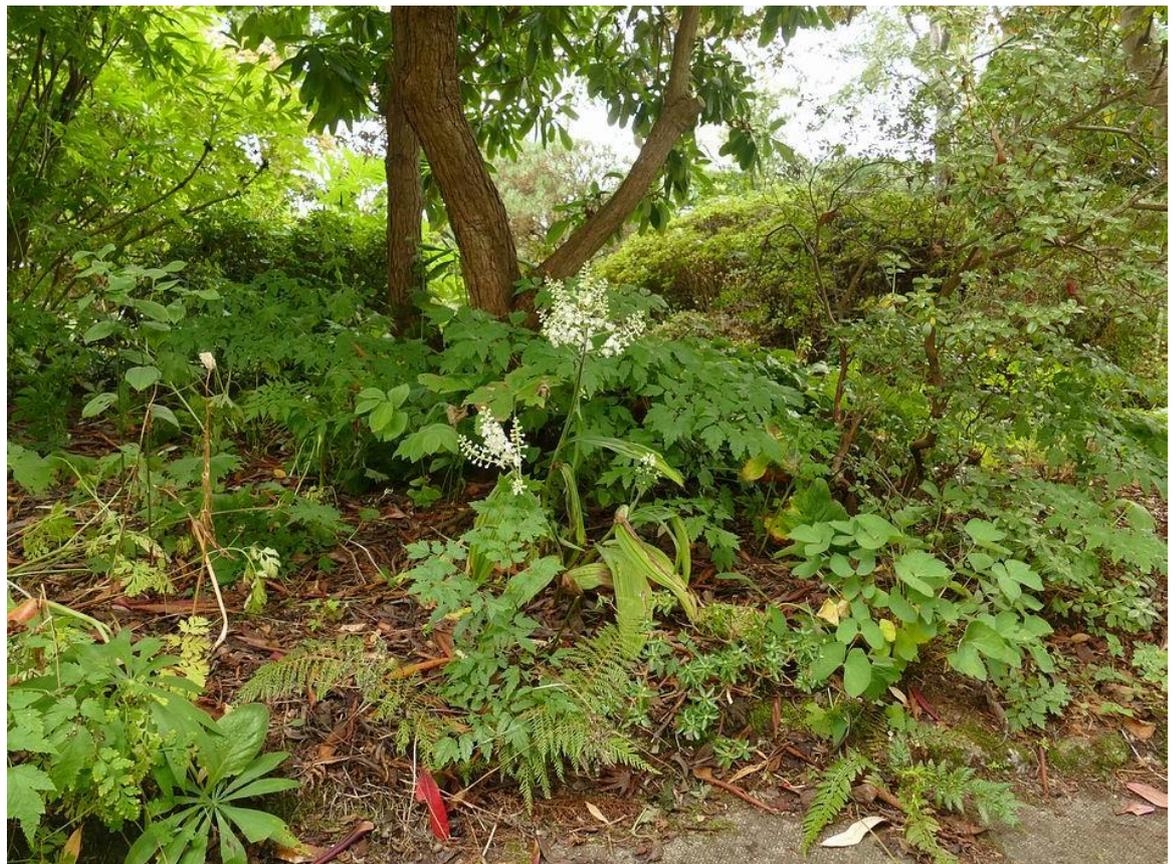
shown below, hold on to their leaves for two years before shedding them.



How plants perform in different conditions is fascinating and sometimes surprising - **Rhododendron yakushmanum** is native to the island of Yakushima in Japan where it grows in relatively wet conditions so you could be excused for thinking that it would suffer in this hot dry summer however the opposite seems to be the case. The fact that all our forms of this plant are covered in flower buds despite the dryness shows that there are other factors that affect the growth and formation of flowering buds – I have suspected they like a bit of warmth.

The frilly white flowers of **Veratrum fimbriatum** stand out under a large rhododendron but the leaves of this plant have suffered in the very dry ground.

The leaves are usually in better condition and the whole plant more robust in our more typical years, when we get plenty of summer rain. As a native of California it must have evolved to tolerate some seasons of drier conditions.





Veratrum fimbriatum



Another plant of **Veratrum fimbriatum** growing in the relatively cooler, shaded, north-facing front garden has done a bit better despite having to grow up through the encroaching growth of surrounding shrubs.



So far my attempts at cross pollinating between the two plants of **Veratrum fimbriatum** have not resulted in seed.



Eucomis bicolor is another plant that brings flowers to the late summer and autumn garden.



Last year we had five flowering stems on this plant of *Eucomis bicolor* but this year I am disappointed that there are only two. This highlights the unreasonable expectations that many gardeners have that their plants should perform to their best every single year, when in reality some years bring better flowering than others, as happens in the wild.

Colchicum and *Roscoea* flowers start to appear among the collapsing foliage of the herbaceous plants that produced their flowers earlier in the year. Many of these plants have suffered through the dry and are now preparing for a winter underground to rest before coming back next spring.





Roscoe 'Harvington Imperial' starts into growth very late, often not appearing above ground until August, but once it starts to flower it just keeps on going until the frosts push the plant back underground.



Gentiana asclepiadea



We used to grow a lot of the Sino-Himalayan autumn gentians very successfully when the garden was young and we were regularly creating new beds, because rich freshly dug soil is exactly the condition that they thrive in – they

also like to be split up and replanted regularly. Because that group of gentians do not do so well in a mature, intensively planted, no dig type of garden that ours has evolved into, we have had to seek other gentian species that can survive these conditions and **Gentiana asclepiadea** is one of these along with forms of **Gentiana septemfida** on the left.





Colchicum cultivars





Crocus speciosus



Crocus vallicola



Crocus nudiflorus



One of a number of **Crocus speciosus hybrids** that have seeded into the joints between the paving slabs showing that crocus are among a number of bulbs that can be successfully grown in the ever-popular types of crevice gardens.



Allium wallichii has seeded into and is growing in the vertical crevice garden that forms one of the raised walls.



Cyclamen hederifolium



More Colchicum enjoying a bit of sunshine.





We always get a better seed set on our autumn flowering Crocus simply because of the large number of pollinators that are around at this time of year but are absent when the spring species are flowering.



The flower spikes of *Veratrum fimbriatum* distract the eye away from the well chewed fan shaped leaves.



Veratrum fimbriatum

I will sign off this week with a close up picture of a spike of *Veratrum fimbriatum* showing the details of the incredible flowers and their fimbriate (having a fringe or border of hairlike projections) margins.....