



BULB LOG 37

14th September 2022





A lot of the time there is plenty of interest in the garden for me to photograph and write about but then there are weeks like this, when the garden has been so battered and watered by strong wind and heavy rain storms, that I think there is nothing to share.

Usually my first task is to find a cover picture and as there were some flowers I decided to gather some together to make a studio still life - wait till you see the studio!



I have quite a collection of old and new glass jars and bottles in a range of shapes which can make good subjects for a still life with or without flowers - I also have some old small stoneware ink pots that I have used previously. The bottles can be arranged against any kind of setting but I like to use a white background which focuses the viewers' attention onto the colourful plant material with the glass playing a supporting role anchoring the composition. You may know and be reminded of, or wish to look up, the still life paintings of Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964).



The studio is anywhere you can set up a sheet of paper and because there is no growth showing in the sand bed as yet it provides me with an ideal platform with good overhead light. Avoid direct light sources unless you want shadows, which will appear darker in the picture than they seem, to form part of the composition. I sometimes use another sheet of white paper to reflect light onto the subject if I want to add some highlights but did not need to on this occasion. To get the correct exposure you will need to overexpose by one or two stops.



I say there is no growth but I did find some ***Sternbergia sicula*** shoots, having been watered last week, that are now extending rapidly. The bulbs are first awakened by a fall in temperature at which point the root tips will often appear around the base of the bulb but it is the water that stimulates them into a phase of active growth. The addition of water also serves to lower the temperature.



Wondering what to write about this week sent me off to pick a few flowers and berries to add colour to the cover. This task made me look carefully around the garden where, once I started looking and seeing, I found plenty of interest and beauty to picture, such as these Crocus shoots coming up again between the paving slabs.



Crocus and other plants growing crevice style in the narrow gaps between the slabs where their seed fell.



At this time this small plunge for Erythronium is being taken over by Crocus nudiflorus with their shoots of promise appearing everywhere –having such different flowering seasons these plants live in perfect harmony.



I wrote of the delicate nature of Crocus and Colchicum flowers which can be easily knocked over in the weather we have been having but their flowers are also a welcome source of fresh food for the armies of slugs and snails we have. One of the down sides of rock gardening is the rocky habitats we create for our plants can also provide ideal places for snail and slugs to live as witnessed by these battered, well chewed, miserable looking Crocus hybrids.



Among the great delights of these autumn flowering bulbs is that no matter how miserable and forlorn they may look while closed up on a grey day, they can still turn on the style when illuminated and warmed by the sunshine.



On my search I found the first of this year's *Colchicum speciosum album* buds thrusting through the ground.

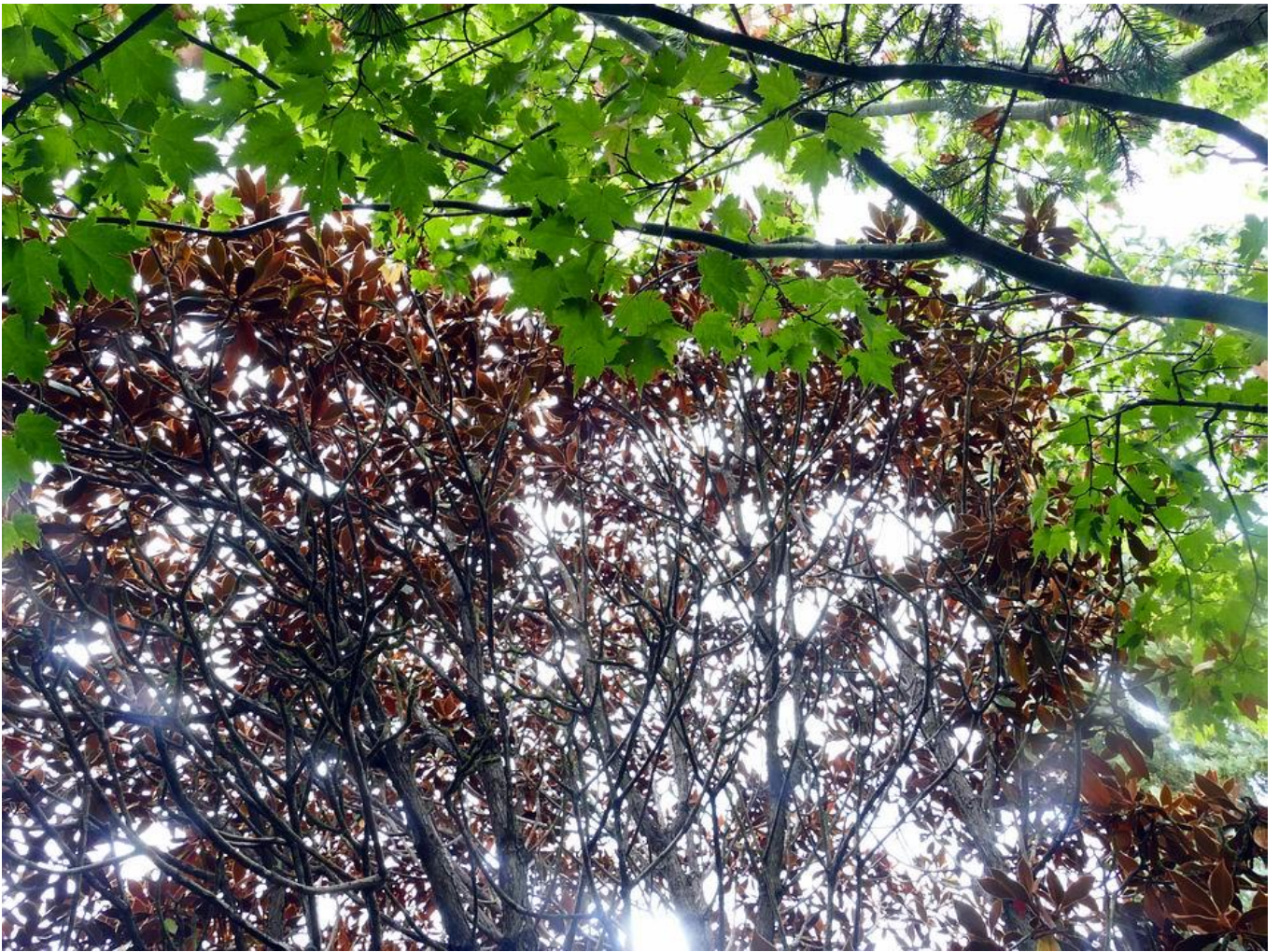


Despite being battered by the weather I still see the beauty and take great pleasure in these mixed *Colchicum* cultivars I am sharing above and in the following series of images.



Most of the bulbs will produce a succession of flowers to take over from those that have fallen over which, like the Crocus, the flowers will still open and close in the sunshine even when they are lying on the ground.





Above my head the light filters through the canopy of leaves provided by *Rhododendron bureavii* and *Acer* species.



Even at this time of year nature provides me with so much beauty and inspiration such as a single chewed leaf.



Isolating this leaf against a white background turns it into an object to be studied leading the viewer into looking more carefully at its colour and shape where we even get glimpses of the internal cellular structure as well as appreciating the abstract form chewed by some grub or caterpillar.



Autumn sees many plants shutting down and I prefer where possible to leave their stems and leaves to slowly wither before collapsing to the ground to slowly break down returning their goodness back into the soil. As they go through the decaying process they provide both a habitat and a food source for insects which in turn become part of the food chain feeding the birds, especially the Tits, which we enjoy watching foraging among the old growths.



The flowers of *Allium wallichii* are subtle and in this flat light you will have to look carefully at this image to even spot them.



Allium wallichii

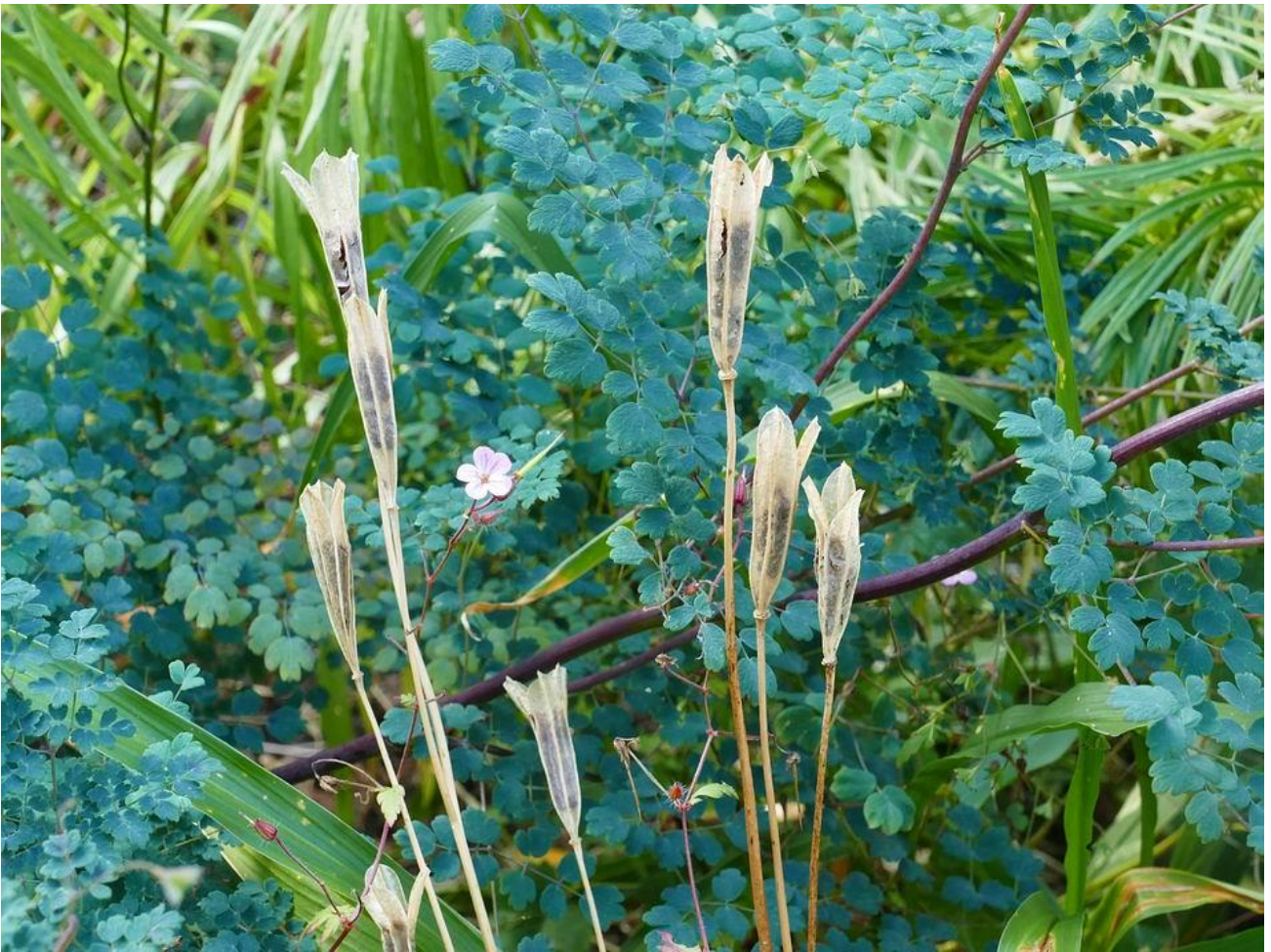


I often return to the subject of lighting and there is something magical about watching the view of the garden changing in front of my eyes - especially noticeable at this time of year as plants and areas are illuminated by the low moving sun causing them to change from the spotlight to shade shown in the next sequence of images..



I took these pictures from the same position using the zoom lens within about five minutes of each other and note how the light completely changes the emphasis.





It amazing what you will find attracts you when you start looking and observing your garden at any time of year.



There are some plants that are in season such as **Roscoeae 'Harvington Imperial'** (right) that only come through the ground in August and **Roscoeae 'Red Gurkha'** (left) whose growth appears even later and its flowers have yet to open - then both plants continue flowering well into the autumn.



The stylish fan shaped leaves of ***Veratrum fimbriatum*** appear early in the year and are often well battered and chewed by the time the stems rise up pushing the clusters of dramatic frilly white flowers into prominence.





***Gentiana asclepiadea* (Willow gentian)** is another of the autumn flowering plants.

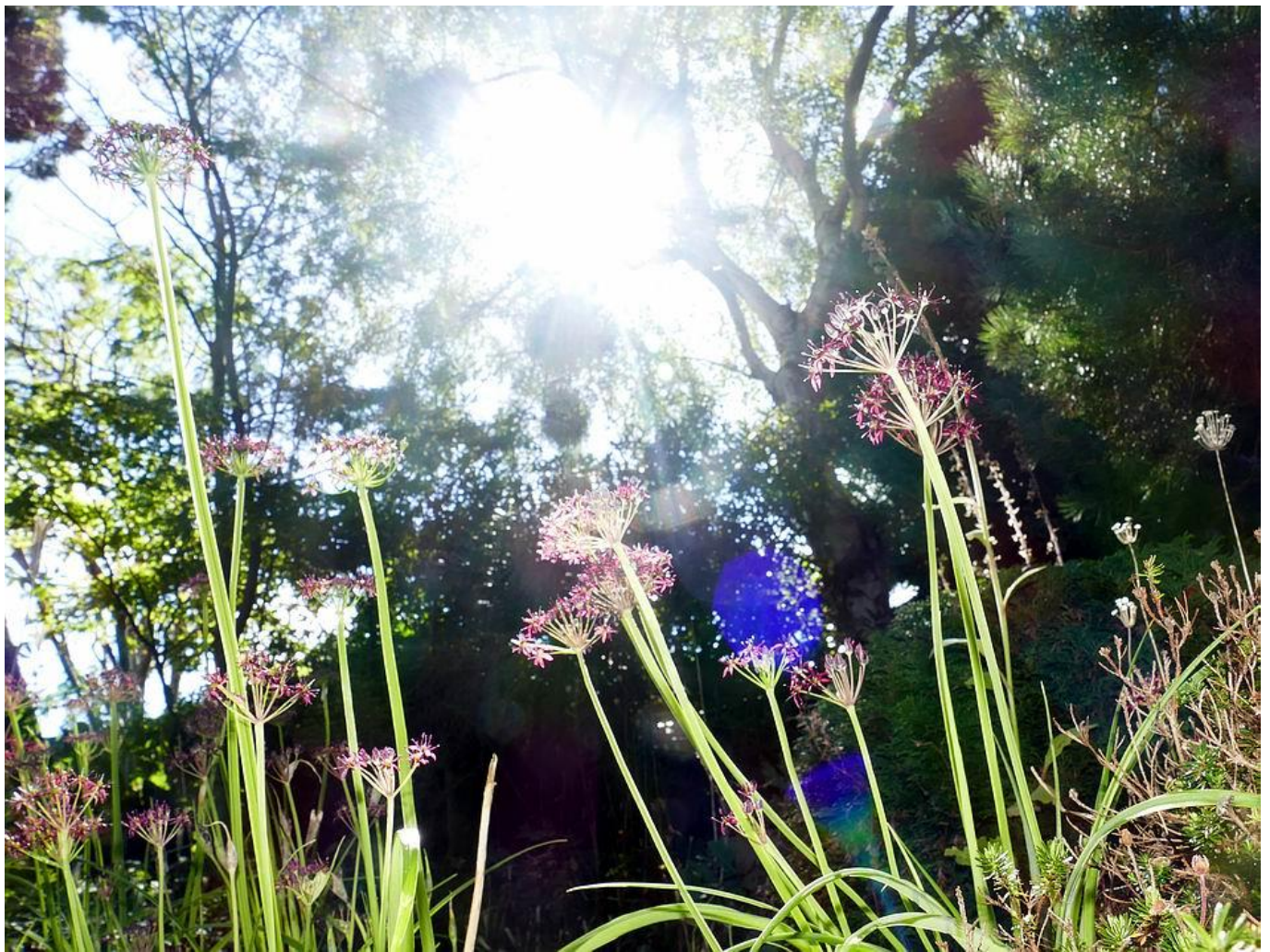




The areas in the garden where I will selectively clear away the old and collapsing growths are where it will obscure or interfere with the emerging *Colchicum* and *Crocus* flowers which deserve to be seen.



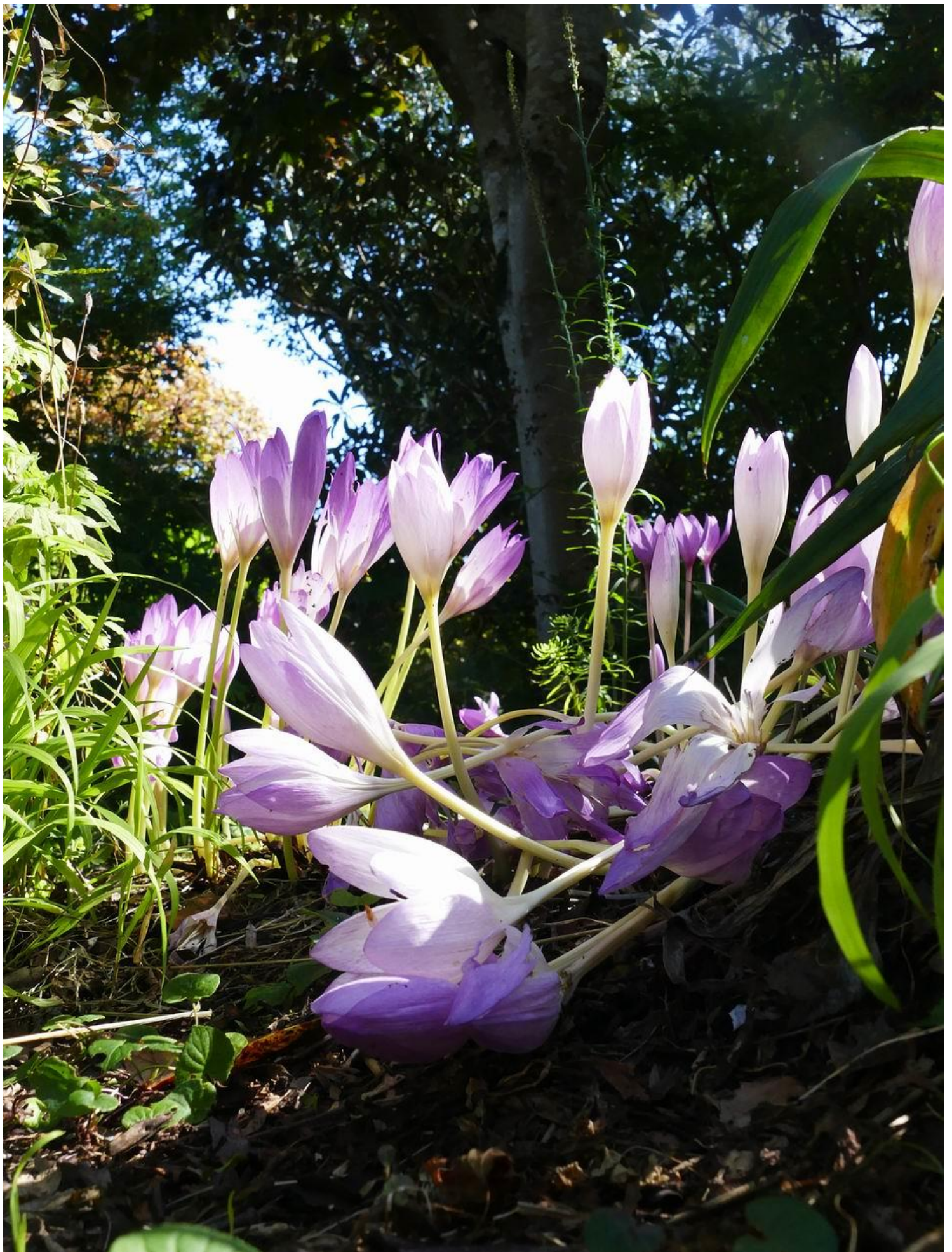
I spotted the first of the seasons ***Crocus banaticus*** flowers peeking out among the leaves of some of the smaller *Roscoea* species a combination which works well as the leaves offer some support for and do not obscure the crocus flowers.



It is all about light here: I am breaking the general rule of having the light source behind you when taking a picture -I took this shot of *Allium wallichii* from a low angle looking directly up towards the sun.



Colchicum flowers illuminated by the dramatic autumnal light.



You may be surprised what you may find if you take a camera with you as you walk round a garden looking for images to capture – look for colour texture and pattern. Sometimes it is more dramatic to choose a low angle and always think about the light.....