



BULB LOG 5.....4th February 2009

I will start this week's bulb log with a look at the first of our *Eranthis hyemalis* pushing through one of the beds that I mulched with our own compost in November and December.



Eranthis hyemalis

Sometimes it is difficult to establish this beautiful spring flower but once it has settled in it will seed around and gradually become naturalised.



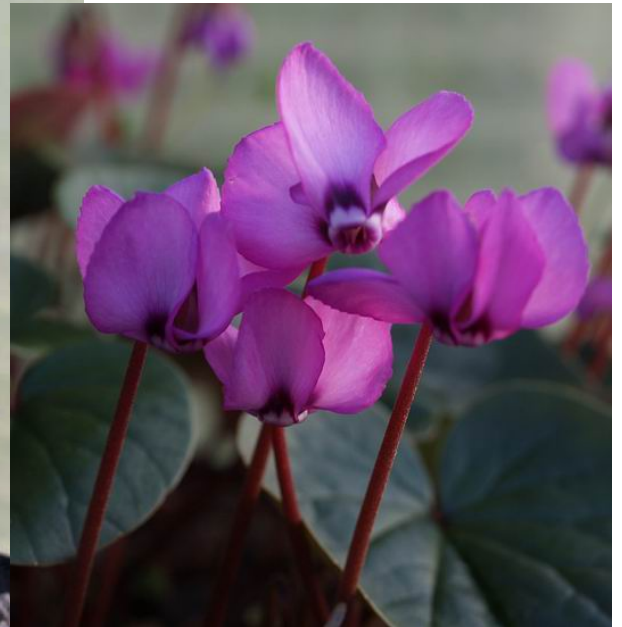
Eranthis pinnatifida

If you remember I showed this pot of ***Eranthis pinnatifida*** in last weeks bulb log when it was looking a bit scraggy. As I said the flower develops above the ground without the protection of any type of bud and gradually grows from an ugly duckling into a beautiful swan.



Eranthis pinnatifida flower

It is well on the way to being that beautiful flower now but it will expand a bit more yet.



Cyclamen coum

This lovely dark flowered form is one of the few *Cyclamen coum*s that I grow in a pot. I would love to grow more in pots but I just lack the room under glass. I have scattered masses of seeds out side in recent years in an attempt to find some that will adjust to our climate. The result is I have lots of seedlings appearing so fingers crossed some will like it here. The few that have survived outside for any length of time were grown from *Cyclamen Society* seeds about ten or fifteen years ago. I cannot say they thrive as they rarely manage to get their flowers up and open before they are decimated by the winter weather or eaten by a hungry slug or snail.



Crocus on plunge

Every day more crocus are appearing and if there is any warmth at all they will open their flowers. It is usually towards the end of the afternoon when the sun hits directly on this part of the glasshouse that the flowers start to open giving me around half an hour to take the pictures before the sun dips below the horizon.



Crocus korolkowii

I got this one many years ago, 1991, from a well known Bulb Seller as *Crocus hadriaticus* which it very obviously is not but it is a rather nice form of *Crocus korolkowii*. I do not hold it against the nurseries when they get things wrong or mixed up as I know only too well how easy it is to get pots contaminated with stray seeds or just for the labels to get swapped over accidentally.



Crocus danfordiae

A nice yellow form of the tiny *Crocus danfordiae* - I think this is the smallest of all the species. You can get an idea of the size of the flower by comparing it to the standard plant label to the right.

I have grown it from seed sown in March 2001 - it did not germinate until January 2003 and this is the first corm in the pot to flower.

I do not find this species the easiest to grow and have received it a number of times as corms but always ended up losing them after a few years.

I do not know if it is a short lived species or if I am not providing it with the best growing conditions for it to survive.

I always prefer to raise bulbs from seeds as I find that you end up with the best stock that has been accustomed to your conditions from the germination stage and as a rule they are the ones that settle down and grow well each year.



Crocus baytopiorum



Crocus baytopiorum

The most unusual and beautiful blue colour of *Crocus baytopiorum* is unique in the *Crocus* family. This is a new form that I just received from a friend last year my other potfull is only just pushing up now.



Narcissus in prop house

Having watered all the bulbs just a few weeks ago there is not too much to do at the moment just the daily routine of checking their general condition to make sure they look turgid with no signs of rot or aphids. Oh, and the most important thing: studying and enjoying them. I often go out to the bulb houses 'for a few minutes' which turns into two hours without me knowing where the time went – just like when I am on the computer.



Narcissus in prop house

It really is the time for the narcissus to dominate with more flowers opening every day for me to inspect. This is called the 'prop house' because it used to be where I had my mist unit and propagated all the plants from cuttings as well as nursing newly germinated seeds. The pots of bulbs in the picture above now occupy what used to be the mist unit which has now been relegated to the space below this plunge. I still raise cuttings under mist but as it now receives much less direct light it is not as efficient as it used to be. I always smiled when I read or heard some one say that when you take cuttings you should put them in a pot cover it with a polythene bag and place it in the shade. This is the opposite of what the cuttings ideally need to root – they want lots of moisture, warmth, bright light and fresh air and when my mist unit was in the top that was what they got. Of course you have to prevent them from drying out so you need the mist to keep them hydrated in the bright fresh air. If you do not have a mist unit you may then need to adopt that polythene bag over the pot which works but not so effectively.



Narcissus 'Craigton Clumper'

One of my named forms of *Narcissus romieuxii* selected for its vigour both to increase and flower freely, 39 flowers in a 7cm pot.



Narcissus romieuxii JCA805

Where would we be without the introduction of *Narcissus romieuxii* JCA805? We would have far fewer forms of this delightful wee narcissus. So many cultivars have been selected directly or raised from subsequent generations of this fabulous stock. However as time has progressed since it was first introduced by the Archibalds many years ago some of the less vigorous variations have almost certainly died out as the dominant forms take over. I remember we had a lovely small deep yellow form that I never managed to isolate before it disappeared.



Narcissus romieuxii

Another pot of *Narcissus romieuxii* but this time it is not derived from JCA805 but another collection of which I have lost the details.



Narcissus 'Atlas Gold'

I got a few bulbs of Narcissus 'Atlas Gold' from a friend two years ago and it has increased well and produces masses of its deep yellow flowers – it is a very good selection indeed. One of the many joys of raising bulbs (and all plants) is being able to share them with friends - giving them away when you have plenty and getting new forms or ones that you have suddenly lost back again - this is the way among most growers.



Narcissus cantabricus foliosus

Narcissus cantabricus foliosus is among the first to flower often opening its flowers in October but this form waits until January before it blooms.



Narcissus in Bulbhouse

Moving into the Bulb house where one whole side is nearly taken up by variations of the hoop petticoat Narcissus - mainly forms or hybrids of *N. romieuxii*.



Narcissus seedling white

I have a number of complete mystery plants that came from the sand plunge and so I have no record of even the seed parent. I could try and speculate what the parents might be but as the true species are sometimes difficult enough to sort out what chance is there to pin down these seedlings on morphology alone. However that does not stop me having fun studying the flowers and leaves closely and coming up with possibilities. I suspect that this white seedling has both *Narcissus cantabricus* and *N. romieuxii* sap in its cells.



Narcissus albidus albidus

Narcissus albidus albidus is very beautiful bulb with a big name and I have often wondered why it is not included in N. cantabricus.

Narcissus albidus albidus

Look again at this picture of the same plant that shows the flower more closely and pay particular attention to the colour of the style and filaments.

You will notice that they are yellowish in colour and not the same white as the corona and petals.



Narcissus white seedling

Here is another unknown seedling but this time you will notice that the style and filaments are the same pure white as the corona – this is usually the case in Narcissus cantabricus.

I doubt if this is pure N. cantabricus but it is a hybrid with that species and N. romieuxii where the cantabricus genes that dictate the colour of the filaments and style dominate.



Narcissus 'Cedric Morris'

I always keep two pots of Narcissus 'Cedric Morris' in the bulb house both as an insurance policy and to better enjoy their flowers that can open as early as November although they were much later than that this year.



Narcissus 'Cedric Morris' flowers

It is a real miniature daffodil in the sense that it is of the trumpet type that even normal people that have not been infected by the bulb enthusiasm can recognise with its deep yellow typical daffodil flowers.



Narcissus 'Cedric Morris' in the garden

Back outside to end the week where I also have some clumps of Narcissus 'Cedric Morris' growing in the garden. One in a scree type bed and the one above in a woody type soil -it is the latter one that does best most years as it seems to prefer the moister conditions.

I say that I keep bulbs under glass as an insurance but that works both ways because sometimes it is the one under glass that you lose and have to replace it with some lifted from the garden or if you have lost it completely and you have previously shared it with some friends you can always ask for a bulb back.