



BULB LOG 2020th may 2009

I dedicate this Bulb Log to the memory of Mrs Kath Dryden VMH who died on Monday 18th May 2009. I was just walking from Sloane Square tube station towards the Chelsea Show ground when I received the call to tell me that Kath had died early that morning. Rather than be sad my companion Ian Christie and I decided to enjoy the happy memories we had of Kath, especially for me going around the Chelsea Show enjoying Kath's wisdom and wit.

Kath was a superb plantswoman and could grow woodland plants in the far south of the UK that many would not even attempt in such hot and dry conditions. I always said that the plants would not dare *not* to grow for her as she was a formidable personality. Despite her strong opinions she was always open to being challenged and could be swayed by a well reasoned argument. Kath did much to encourage me in my interest in bulbs and I had many a long telephone conversation on the plants we both enjoyed so much. We have lost a great lady but we will never forget her and all the plants that she has raised.



Jacques Amand stand at Chelsea

This is a corner of Jacques Amand's Gold Medal winning stand at Chelsea and many a time in the past I have enjoyed this exhibit in the company of Kath Dryden discussing the many interesting 'woodland plants' he displays.



Paris species

We had a long discussion over the many Paris species that John had on display and what they might be called.

I think the general agreement was that a lot more study is needed to understand this fascinating genus.

Watch out for a lot more of my pictures from Chelsea in the forum.

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Ornithogalum

Last week I showed some of the Ornithogalums growing in the bulb house and here are a few closer images of the lovely flowers. I have not got round to keying out what species they might be so would be grateful to any one who may know.

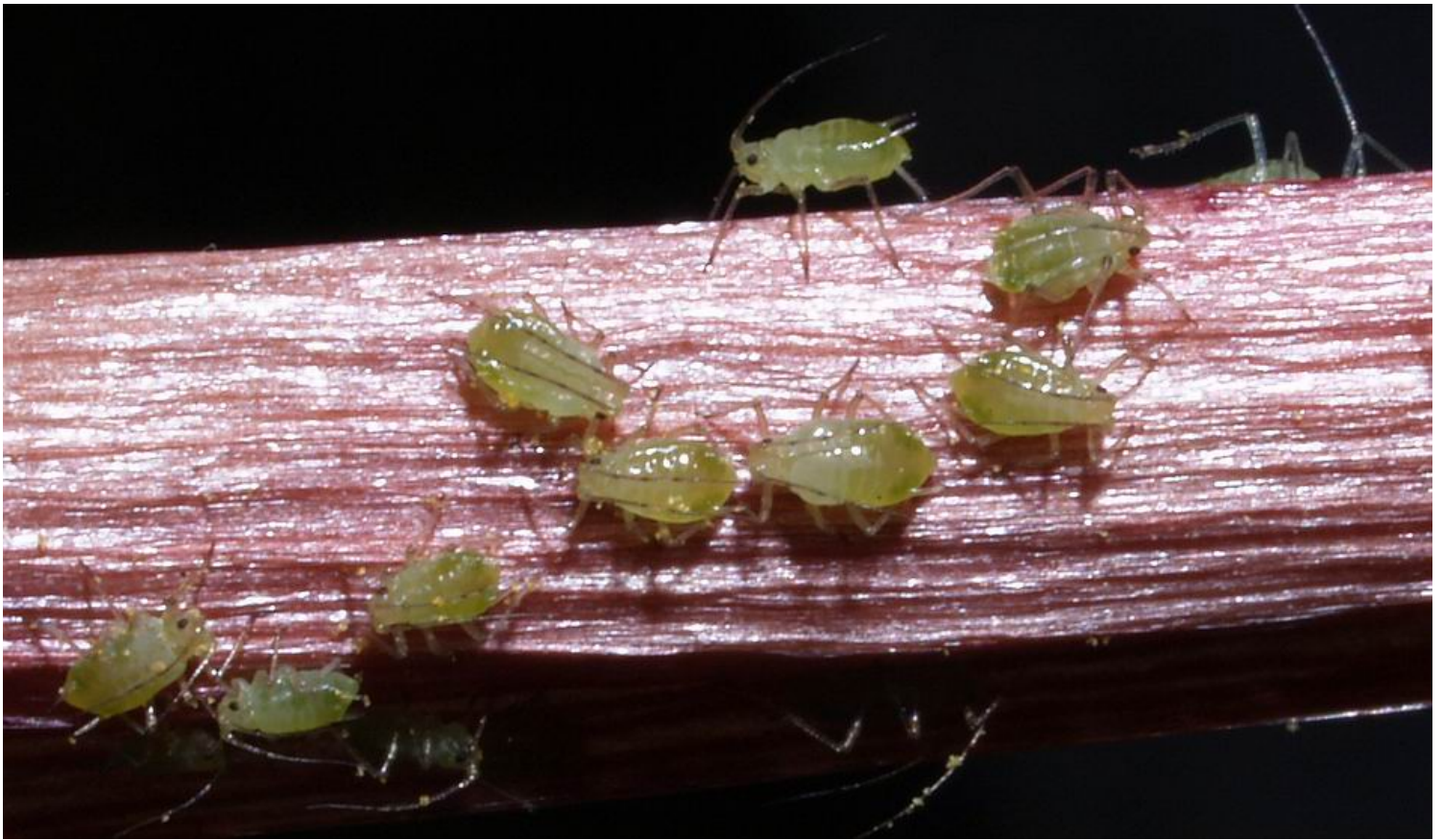


Ornithogalum nutans

Ornithogalum nutans with its white corona like centre, is a bit like a white narcissus.



Ornithogalum Sp.



Aphids

While the cat's away the mice will play goes the saying and so it is with aphids. Never get complacent and always be on the look out for aphids on the bulbs. There are certain times when they are more likely to appear on bulb foliage one is when the fresh new growth first appears the other time is when the bulb is preparing to go into dormancy.



Aphids

Last week I showed the stems of Narcissus oozing sap after I had removed the seed pods – that is exactly what attracts these fascinating creatures. I have in the past always sprayed the foliage with a systemic insecticide when the leaves first emerge and again at the first signs of the leaves going back but this year I am trying to be completely organic. I have constantly been inspecting my bulbs for signs of aphids and as soon as I see any I wipe them out with my finger and thumb. These aphids were on the stem of a Tulip which along with Fritillaria seems to be a favourite target that they are most attracted to in the late spring so I use these as indicator plants. Once you have identified an indicator plant you simply check it every day as that is where any infestation is likely to start.



Yellow leaves

I am a bit surprised by the speed that many of the bulbs have gone back this year but they seem to have completed their growth cycle and many have set good seed. When I think back many of these Narcissus started into growth in October and have been in green growth for at least six months now so that is not too short a growing season for them. In fact that is probably a much longer growing season than many of them would enjoy in their native habitat. If I am worried that some of these pots might be too wet now the bulbs are dormant, I will knock the gravel top dressing off which allows them to dry out quicker and reduces any risk of wet rot attacking the bulbs.



Nothoscordum ostenii

I am doing well with this delightful South American bulb as it increases slowly by division and gives me some seeds most years as well.



Nothoscardum ostenii

It is always good to find some bulbs that will extend the flowering season under glass beyond the usual period and this species along with the related *Alliums* and of course the *Ornithogalums* are filling that role nicely – all I need is more space.



***Calochortus
uniflorus***

The *Calochortus* are another genus that could extend my bulb flowering season under glass but so far the only one that I have kept long term is *C. uniflorus*. I did try a number of other species many years ago when we were still showing our plants but found them too straggly for the Judges' tastes.



Calochortus uniflorus

Perhaps I will try again as they would look fine growing through the yellowing leaves of the other bulbs and the beauty of their flowers is the main reason for attempting them. It would not matter if they were on long and straggly stems.



Fritillaria camschatensis

The main interest of the flowering bulbs has shifted from the glasshouses to the open garden now where plants like the wonderful dark flowers of *Fritillaria camschatensis* are very happy. I am flowering this species much better now since I eventually learnt that the bulbs do not like to be planted too deep. They flower best when the bulb is just covered in a few inches of organic mulch and in the past when I replanted them deeper, they grew well enough but did not flower as freely as they do now.



Pollinator

Their dark colour and putrid scent seems irresistible to flies like this one who do a very efficient job of moving pollen around.



Fritillaria camschatensis yellow

We will all be saddened at the passing of Kath Dryden VMH but we will always remember her by the great legacy of knowledge and plants that she shared so freely. I will end now with one of the many bulbs that I first acquired as a gift from dear Kath, the rare yellow form of *Fritillaria camschatensis*.