



BULB LOG 34.....26th August 2010





Codonopsis grey wilsonii

They say a picture is worth a thousand words so just enjoy the large image of the hoverfly on a Codonopsis grey wilsonii flower, above. I love the fauna as well as the flora that we have in our garden and I always spend too much time trying to photographing the insects when they visit.



Gentiana septemfida

I enjoy the late summer and autumn Gentians and it is the septemfida group that do well for us because they are happy to be left undisturbed and tucked in with other plants.

The Asiatic autumn gentians on the other hand have not fared so well for us for many years. We used to have masses of them when we were first developing the garden and could provide them with a good well cultivated soil, rich in organic matter. In those days we would split and divide them every two years, just as they were emerging, to provide more plants. However they do not respond well to our more mature garden and all the competition that brings. I have just planted out some seedlings I raised into one of the beds where we removed some big shrubs and dug lots of garden compost into the soil and they are growing well but I suspect they will not do well in the long term. In my experience these Asiatic gentians are like many of the Meconopsis and respond best to being grown in a vegetable type garden where the soil is dug and enriched every year and the plants are lifted and divided at least every two years.



Eucomis vandermerwei

A number of the Eucomis that I have been trying to establish are coming into flower around the garden providing some welcome interest in the bulb beds ahead of the main autumn flowering from the Crocus and Colchicums. They are fascinating plants that deserve to be grown more widely and I am encouraged by how most of them survived the hard winter we had last year.



Eucomis vandermerwei- lightly chewed by pests!

These Eucomis vandermerwei were only planted this spring so have not been tested through a winter yet.



Eucomis bicolor

On the other hand as regular readers of the bulb log will remember from previous years, *Eucomis bicolor* has been proved hardy over twenty and more years for us.

You will see that this too suffers from pest attack on the foliage.



Eucomis autumnalis

We have grown and lost *Eucomis autumnalis* and I am now trying it again – this is the plant that I showed a picture of the exposed bulb in full growth a number of bulb logs back. Now it has settled into its new location in a bulb bed where hopefully it will survive long term.



Cyclamen hederifolium

Elsewhere in the garden the flowers of *Cyclamen hederifolium* herald the advancing autumn for me – as if I needed reminding. The cooler mornings and shortening daylight hours are all too obvious now.



Cyclamen purpurascens

Cyclamen purpurascens is the first of the genus to flower for us and its first flowers appeared in the bulb log in early July and it still has plenty of flowers. Thanks to a number of generous friends we now have lots of seedlings and some small plants with variable marked leaves to add to our stock.



Cyclamen hederifolium album

A venerable plant that has achieved some size is this *Cyclamen hederifolium album*. Look carefully at the tangle of flower stems still to raise themselves up to flower and you will get an idea of the size of this individual. Despite its size we only discovered its flowers this week when Maggi was clearing away some of the old foliage of *Corydalis*, *Aquilegia* and *Tropaeolum*. At the same time we revealed this colourful fruit of *Podophyllum hexandrum*.



Podophyllum hexandrum fruit



Paeonia lutea ludlowii

Last week I touched on the issues of a garden in middle age and this picture of some of the trees and shrubs in our garden illustrates one of the issues that we need to address on a regular basis – pruning. If we did not control the growth of them we would soon lose all the ground planting areas where the bulbs grow. The large shrub in the centre of the picture is *Paeonia lutea ludlowii* – a fine specimen but it is taking over too much space so it needs a trim.



***Paeonia lutea ludlowii* and shredder**

It is only when you look at the amount we have removed that you start to realise how these plants can dominate an area. I have removed all this and we still have a very fine specimen left.



***Paeonia lutea ludlowii* shredded**

Nothing is wasted in our garden as all prunings are shredded and composted. Composting and mulching ensures that all the elements that were contained in the leaves and stems remain in our garden and so will enrich the soil and feed future growth.



Composting

In the last weeks I have been cutting our large hedges as well as pruning some of the trees and shrubs and I have a compost heap some 1m x 1m x 2m. Because I build a big heap quickly from shredded material it heats up and composts very quickly. I placed a thermometer in the heap and recorded that it reached a temperature of 42C within twenty four hours of being built. I am continuing to add material and in the picture above you can see the

new green shreadings on the right and the brown ones on the left went on the heap 12 hours earlier. I dug a small hole in the heap in the hope to illustrate the steam rising from the hole in the centre of this picture – I hope that you can make it out.



Paeonia lutea ludlowii

They say every day is a school day and indeed I am constantly learning things in the garden for instance the different smells that the various shrubs make as I shred them. The peony had a very chemical like smell and I got the impression of some terrible medicine.

The other fact I gleaned was that the seeds of this plant that I am used to seeing in the fully ripe state as shiny black are a lovely yellow colour.



Rhododendron elegantulum

We have to steel ourselves to cut back some of the shrubs especially when they have such fine and attractive foliage as can be seen in this pile of *Rhododendron elegantulum* foliage. Controlling the growth is necessary if we are to maintain the garden as we would like it to be and keep a wide variety of habitats for the different plants we grow.



Newt

Having a garden with this wide range of habitats of trees, shrubs, under plantings and a high humus soil is also an advantage to native fauna such as this common newt that we found scrubbing about in the undergrowth.



Newt

Maggi was quick to volunteer to pick this lovely wee reptile up and hold it in her hand for me to take a picture to indicate the scale but no amount of persuading would get her to hold the next subject for my camera below.



Urocerus gigas - Woodwasp

It is a monster of an insect for these parts at least 5cms long but perfectly harmless.



Anyone seen George?