



BULB LOG 46.....17th November 2010



Birthday Cake

I did intend to keep my 60th quiet but a little birdie spread the word and to my delight everyone made a fuss of me on my birthday last Saturday at the SRGC AGM. The President had asked Margaret Taylor to make me a cake and what a cake it was complete with Erythronium ‘Craigton Cover Girl’ on the top. Not only did it look wonderful it tasted superb and many said it was the best fruit cake they had ever tasted –loaded with Madeira I am not surprised.



Canon PowerShot SX210 IS

As the cold weather has slowed the growth of the bulbs right down there is not too much new to report on the plant front so I will take the opportunity to review my latest camera that I got for my birthday.



Only a little bigger than my Canon Ixus 85 IS it fits neatly in my hand or in a pocket so is very easy to carry with me all the time. Despite its size it packs a lot of extra features.



Canon PowerShot

Unlike the Ixus the lens does not retract completely flush with the body - when closed a small rim remains but that is not a big problem when you consider the 14 x optical zoom lens. The slightly larger size allows the PowerShot to have a good sized and bright viewing screen which is very clear and so far I have had not any problems seeing the view in strong sunlight – but then again we do not get strong sunlight in the winter. I also find the controls easy to use and I can quickly shift between the different settings. One slight issue is that I did find depending on how you held the camera you could activate a function button and rotate the scroll wheel which is around the function button and so inadvertently change a setting. I realised immediately when I did this as the changes are all displayed on the LCD screen and I now make sure that I hold it so I do not touch these controls.



Canon PowerShot

You might very well ask did I need a new camera and I would have to say no, but, I had seen and played with the SX210 while passing a few hours transfer in an airport and was very impressed with its features so Maggi got it for my birthday. I love my small Canon Ixus because it can go everywhere with me but sometimes I missed the full control I get with my SLR – this camera combines all these features into its compact body. It has several auto modes for ‘point and shoot’ of selected subjects under different situations - aperture priority, shutter priority as well as full manual modes plus it has a manual focus setting. Combined with a 14 x optical zoom lens a good wide angle and 15 million pixels this is a powerful camera in a tiny package that will give me everything from point and shoot to full creative control.

Below you will find some of my trial shots to test its range out – also all of the pictures in last week’s bulb log were taken on it.



Wide angle

This is the view at the wide angle setting and below is the image you can capture standing on the same spot taken with the 14 x optical zoom. It also illustrates the camera's point and shoot auto metering system can cope with a very high contrast image keeping some detail in both the shadows and the brightest parts of the image.



14 x zoom

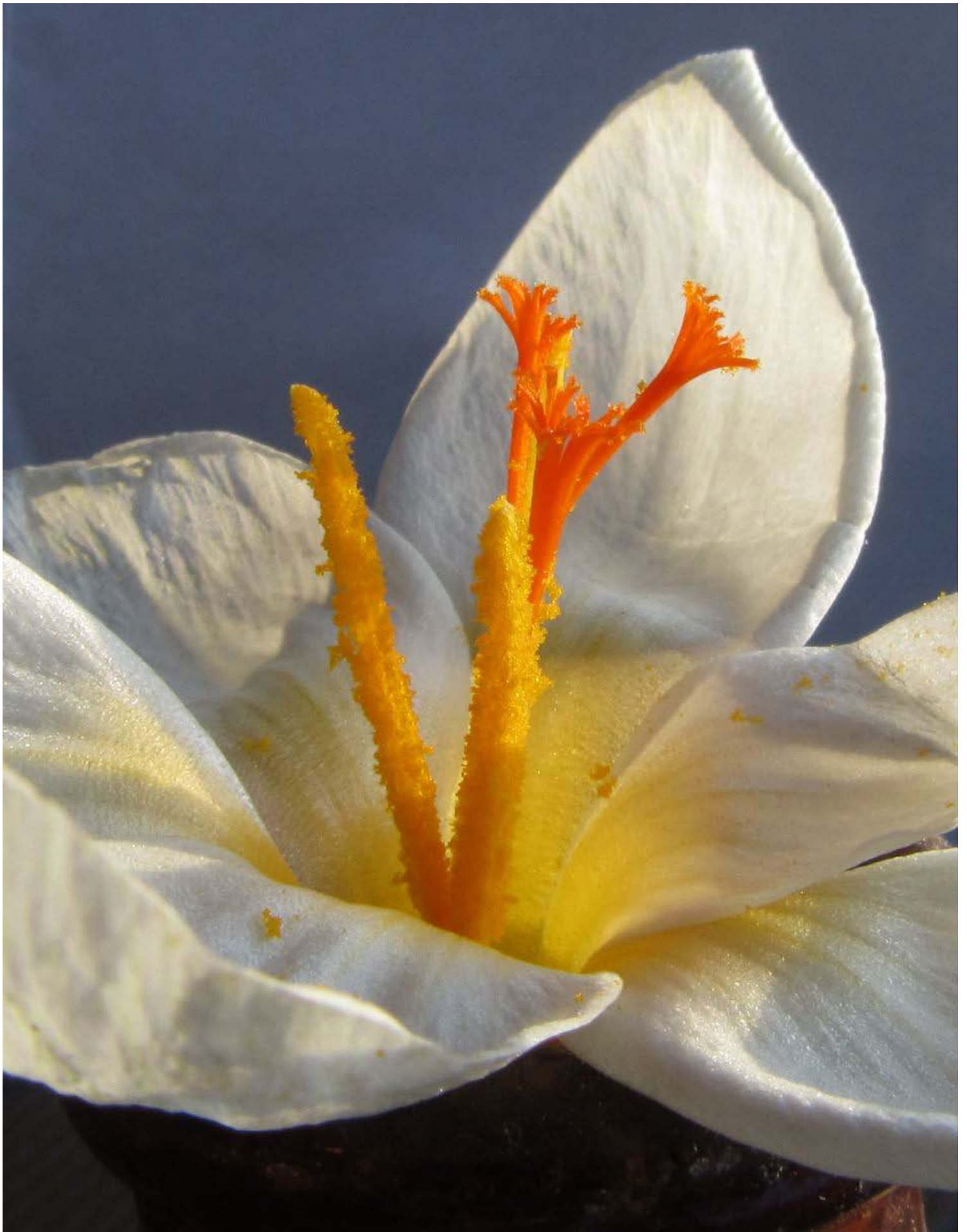


Corydalis mucronipetala natural light

As always when I get a new camera I will test it out under varying light conditions using different white balance settings as well as. The picture above was taken in natural light and the one below using the built in flash. The image captured in the above picture came closest to how I saw the scene. I am pleased that this plant of Corydalis mucronipetala is establishing well and I have hopes that it will flower for the first time in our garden next spring. I did notice the weed on the left and went back and removed it.



Corydalis mucronipetala using flash



Crocus niveus

The above picture was to test the macro capabilities. I placed the camera on the mini tripod seen above, used aperture priority shutting the lens down to the minimum f8 setting, chose the lowest ISO setting of 80 to maximize quality, focused manually and used the self timer to prevent camera shake. I think you can tell from the picture above, which is not shown full size, that it is a pretty acceptable result.



Crocus niveus

Here are two more comparative pictures to test how it copes with white subjects the left hand image using natural light and auto white balance and the right hand one using flash.



Eucomis bicolor

Here I am testing the cameras metering ability to cope with intense back light on a subject – I choose the centre weighted metering option. Once you learn their location it is very quick and easy to change the settings. When I have taken digital photography workshops the first thing I always do is get the participants to learn at least the basic controls of the camera such as how you turn the flash on and off, how to change the metering from average to centre weighted and spot, etc. It is essential if you want to get the best from your camera that you understand what it can do and how you change the settings – you will only learn this if you sit down and play with it.



Eucomis bicolor

A real test was to allow the sun to burn into the edge of the picture. I was pleased with how it coped and by careful framing I managed to capture sun rays and keep the subject well lit so it did not go into silhouette



Mould on pot.

These spots of white mould have formed on slug pellets that I had to use sparingly to tackle the slugs that had got into the bulb house. You need to be aware of this mould problem as it can quickly spread into the plants if it comes into contact with the leaves or stems.

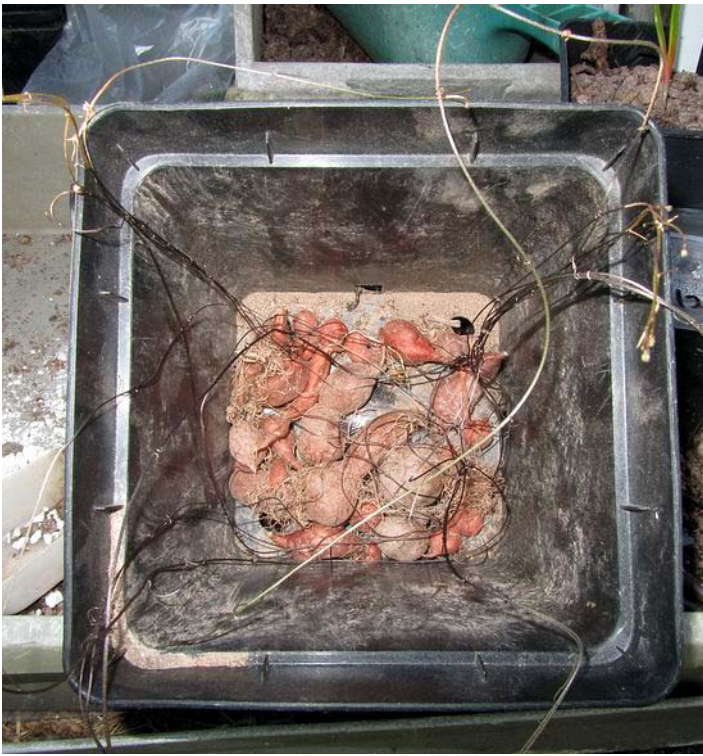


Scilla lingulata

A couple more test shots as I familiarise myself with my new camera this time of the beautiful *Scilla lingulata* – notice the lovely ‘hairy’ stems especially clear in the picture below.



Scilla lingulata



Tropeolum tricolorum tubers

While looking for subjects to photograph in the bulb house I discovered this pot of spare Tropaeolum tubers which have produced many long thin growths without even being planted.

This illustrates so well the capabilities of bulbs to start into growth using the food stored in their swollen underground organs before any water is available. So as not to disturb or harm the growths I will not disturb the tubers but just fill the pot up with a potting mix.



Harry Jans DVDs

I will end this week with the highest of recommendations for these wonderful DVDs filmed and produced by Harry Jans.

I was blown away the first time I saw these – Harry has done a brilliant job filming and editing these to combine the moving images and recorded sound with added music to create enthralling visions that must be the next best thing to being in these mountains. We are all used to seeing the highest of quality slide and digital shows but always of still images - these bring in that extra dimension of time and hence movement that brings the subjects be they plants or people to life. I was never that fond of Meconopsis punicea – despite the superb colour - I just could not understand the flower that looks like a burst red balloon hanging limply from the top of a stick until I saw the moving images in Harry's DVD. Harry shows a steep mountain side covered in the brilliant red flowers of Meconopsis punicea but instead of hanging vertically and limp, as in a still image, they were blown horizontal by the constant wind fluttering like a thousand silk prayer flags fluttering on this high Chinese Mountain – it makes all the difference.

At 41, 48 and 60 minutes duration these would make a great present to anyone interested in plants or travel as well as being a great way to spend a Group evening. All you need is a laptop and digital projector a pair of PC speakers to plug in and you and your group will have a most thrilling evening enjoying the plants, people and the culture of these areas through the creative talents of Harry Jans.

They are available to buy at a most reasonable price through [Harry's website](#).