SRGC ----- Bulb Log Diary ----- Pictures and text © Ian Young

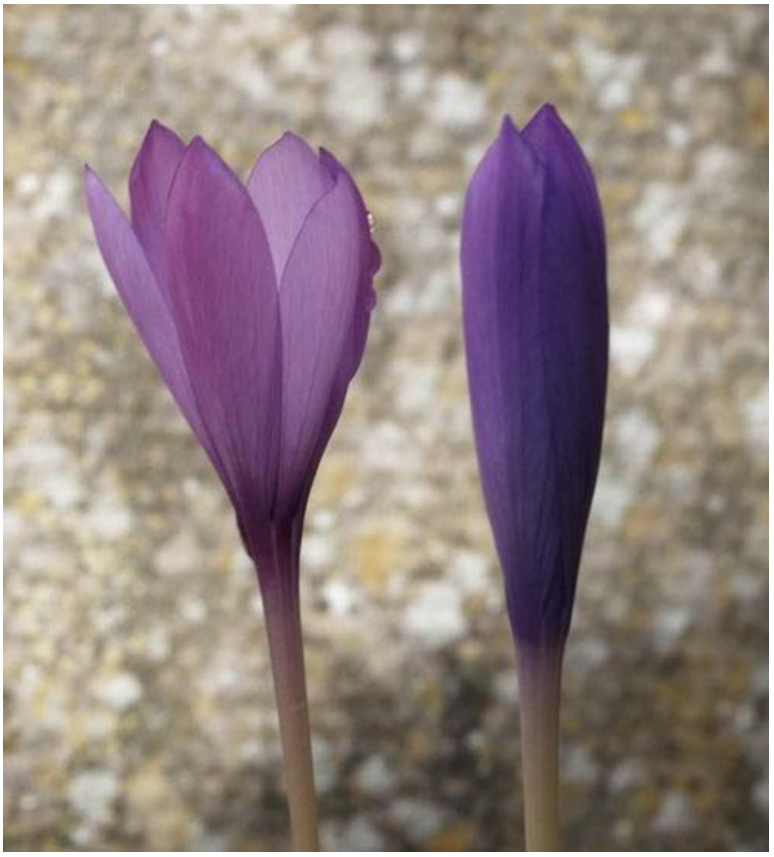
BULB LOG 40…….....……6th October 2010

Pollinator

We have just arrived back home after four days away at the SRGC Discussion Weekend where we had a great time enjoying an excellent series of lectures as well as all the socialising that makes this annual event so popular and successful. Luckily the sun was shining for a while so I managed to get some pictures for this week's bulb log. I was not the only one to be lured out by the sunshine on the flowers as everywhere I looked there were masses of hoverflies pollinating the crocus and colchicums.

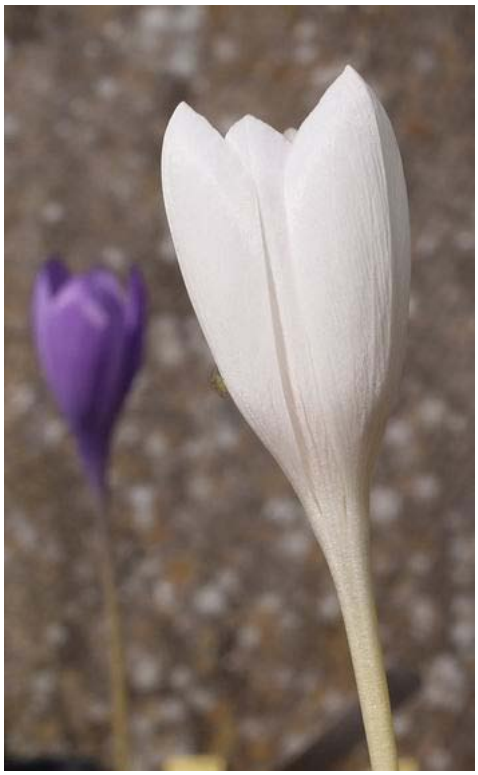
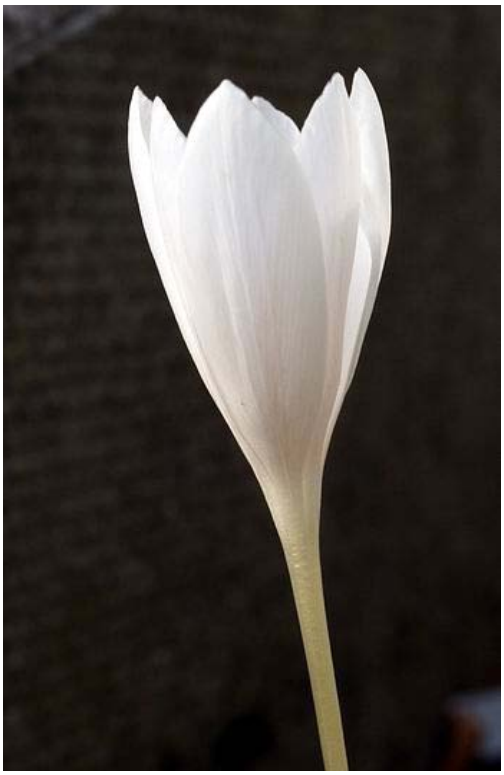
Crocus nudiflorus 'Orla'

The first white form of Crocus nudiflorus I came across was named 'Orla'. This is a group of it flowering in one of the frames containing mesh plunge baskets which are meant to contain and keep the bulbs from mixing but nobody explained that to this crocus that spreads by stolons and now there are odd flowers appearing all over this plunge.




Crocus nudiflorus ‘Orla’ seedlings

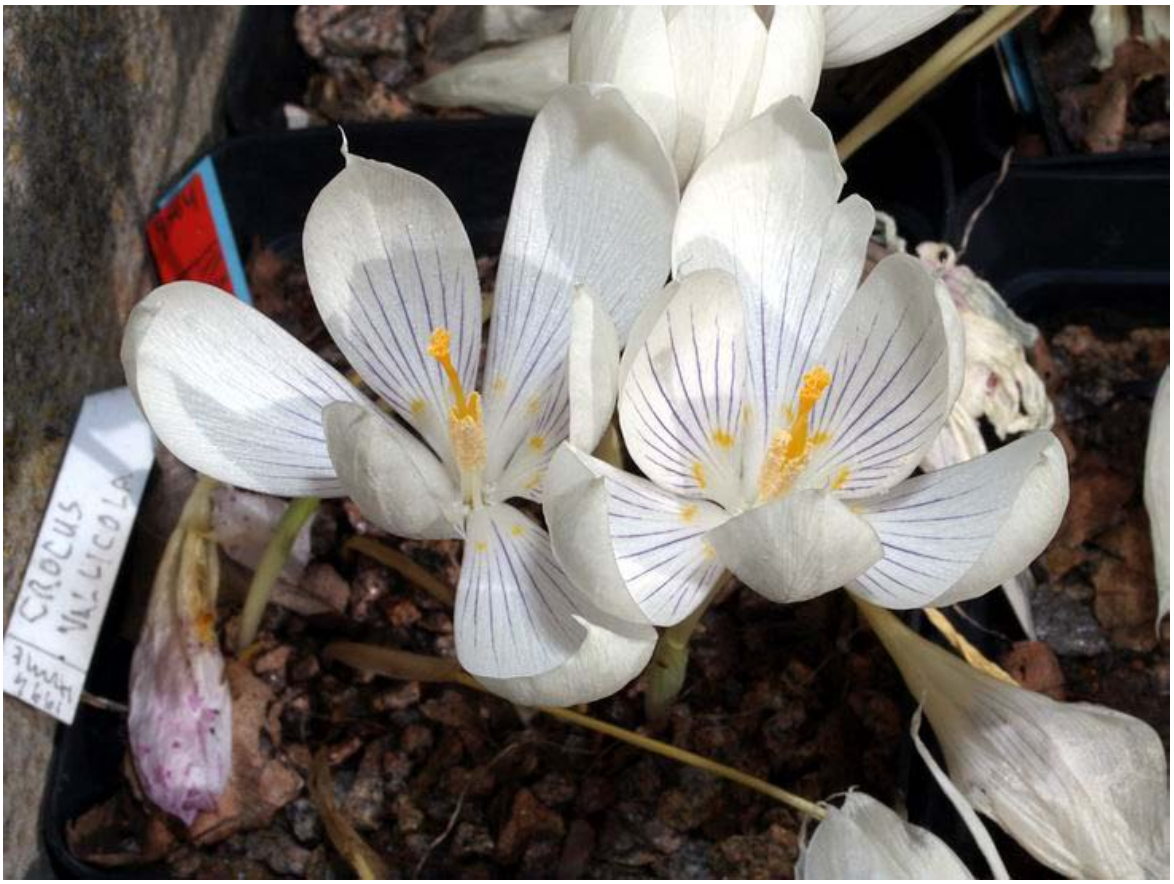
‘Orla’ is fully fertile and produces some seeds most years and but as with most albino forms of plants they do not all retain the white colour when raised from seed. These seedlings have reverted to the more normal colour range of the species. And very pretty they are, too.

Crocus nudiflorus ‘Orla’ and seedlings

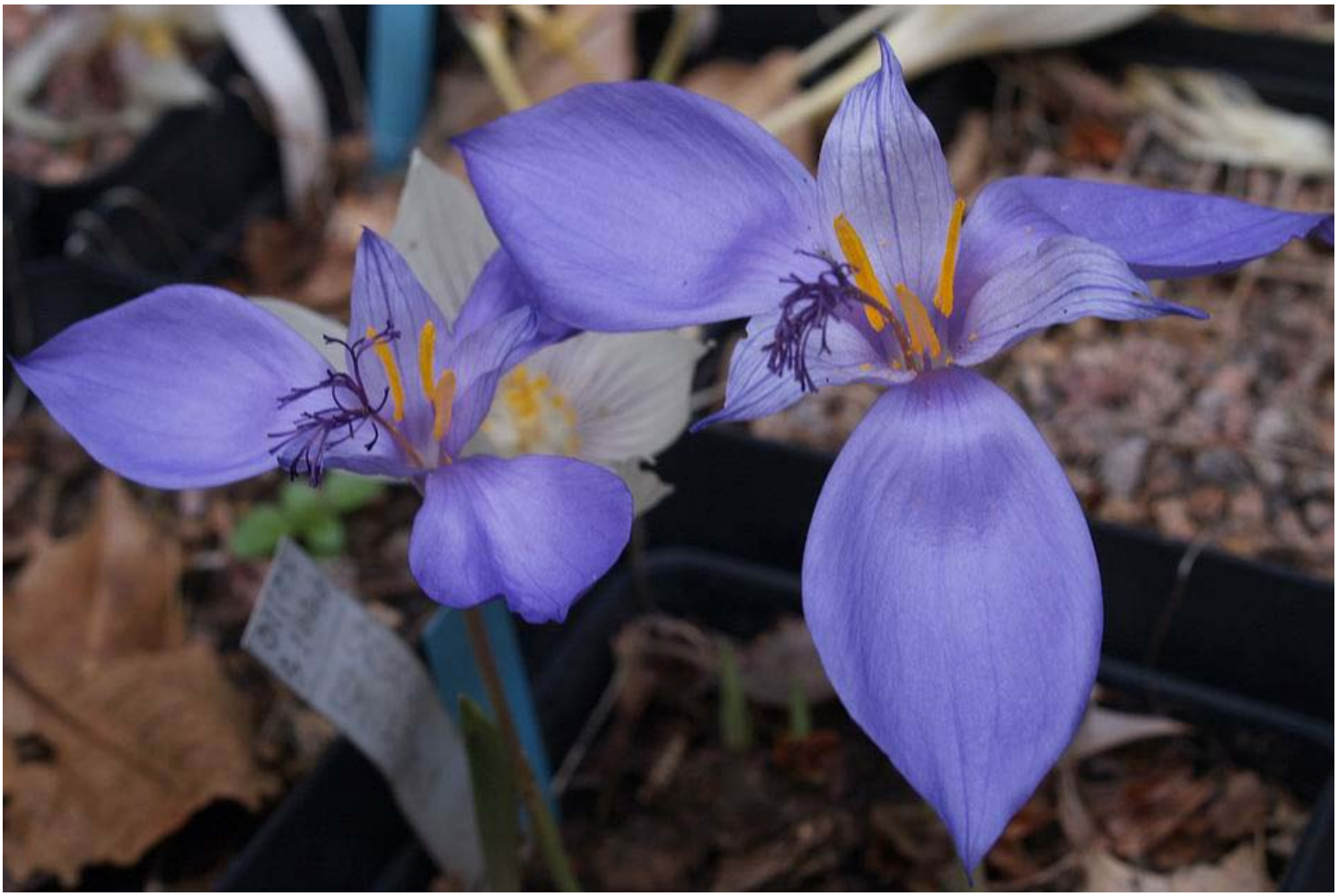
A few of the many seedlings I raise each year have turned out to be white and are a better white than ‘Orla’ itself. The flower on the left is ‘Orla’ which has a slightly dirty purple hue through it when it is in bud- this disappears after a day or so and then the flower is nearly pure white however the two white seedlings on the right that I have raised from seed are pure white from the moment they appear.

Crocus vallicola and banaticus

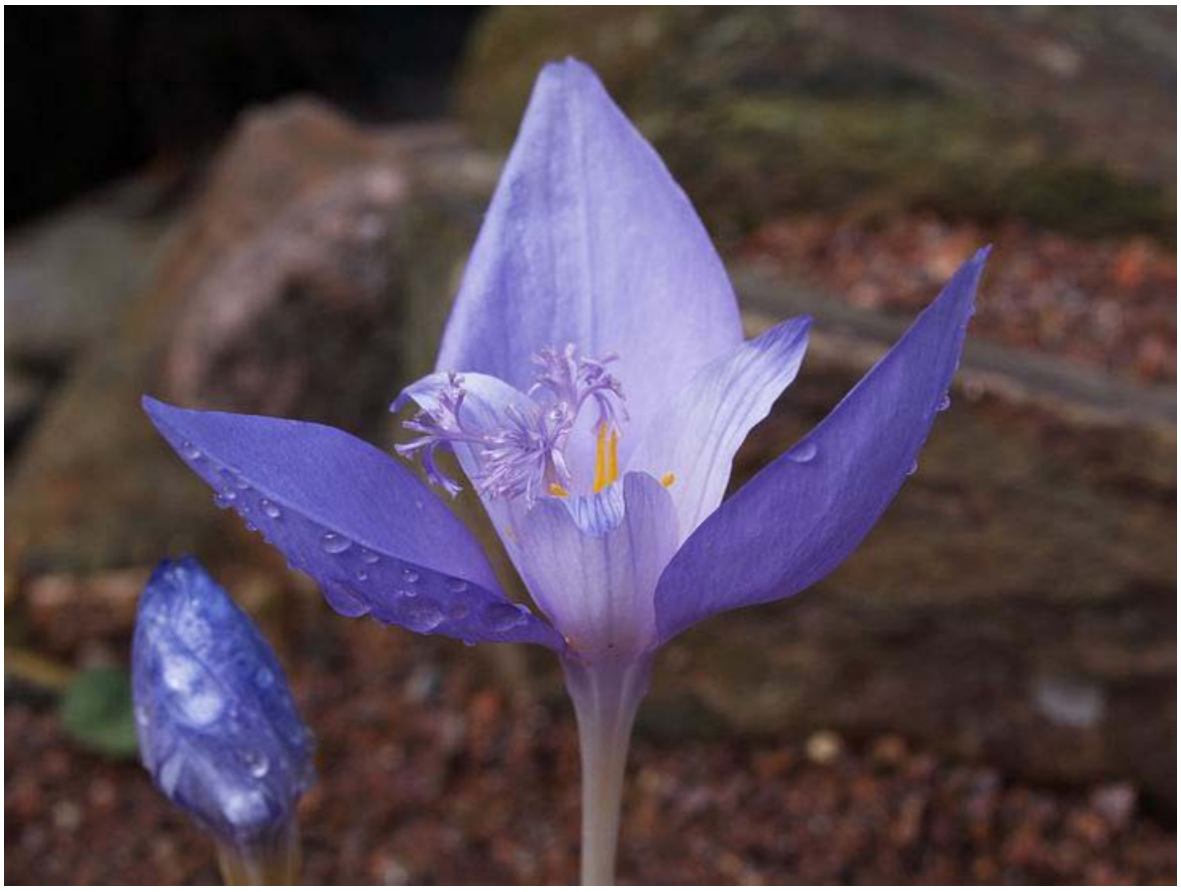


Crocus vallicola

I featured Crocus vallicola a few weeks ago in the bulb log but I could not resist showing it again as it still puts on a wonderful display. It is one of the many Crocus species that will produce a second flush of flowers just after the first flowering and these were looking wonderful in the late sunshine as they opened their flowers to attract the hoverflies. The blue Crocus in the foreground is the very distinctive Crocus banaticus.



Crocus banaticus



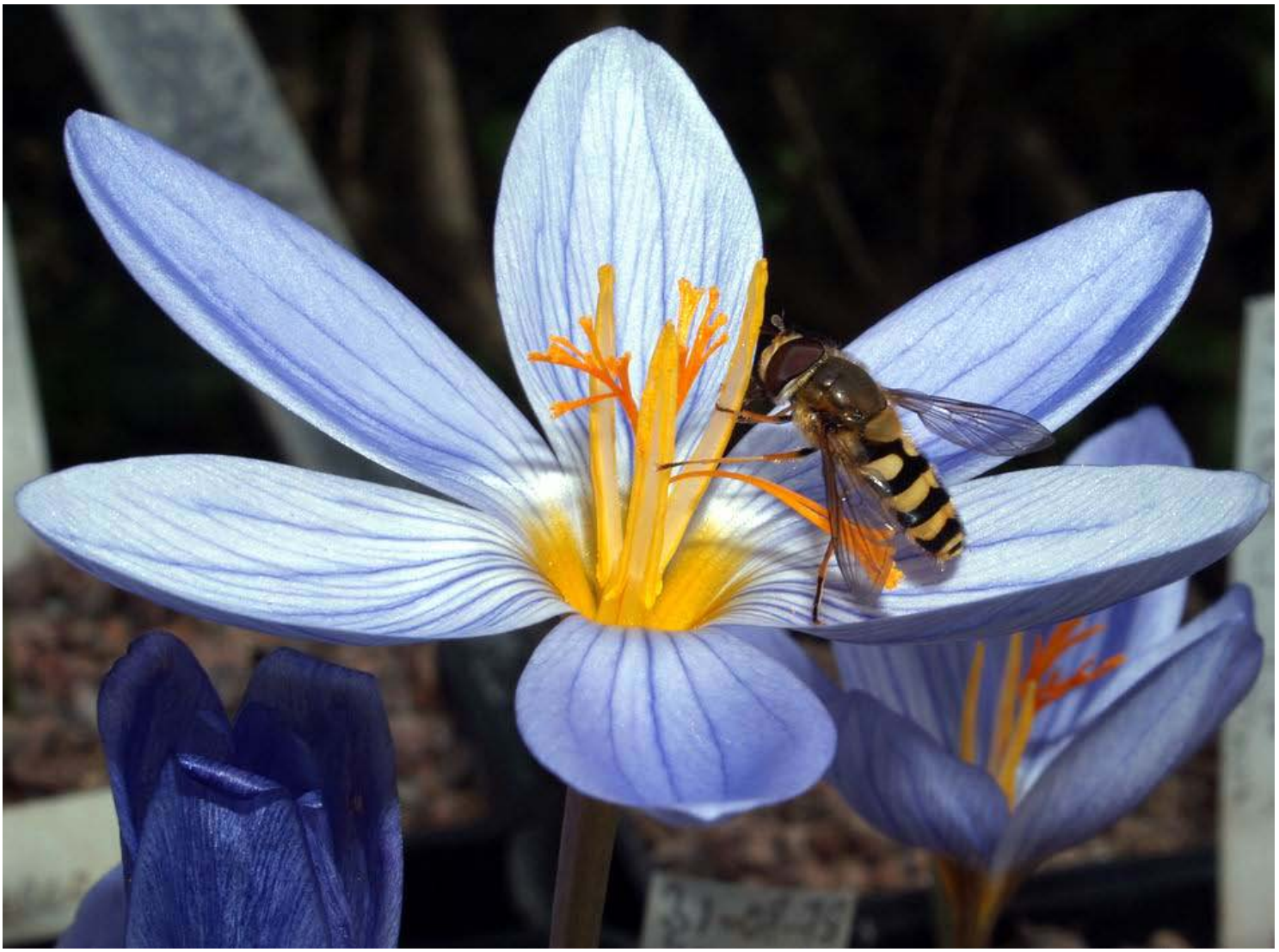
Crocus banaticus

You could never mistake Crocus banaticus for any other species because of the uneven floral segments - the inner three are significantly shorter than the outer three. There are a number of colour variations as these two pictures show. Like Crocus vallicola this species does not like to get too hot and dry over the summer and it much prefers to grow outside where there is always some moisture available.

Crocus in sand bed above and below

Crocus speciosus ssp xantholaimos

This group of Crocus speciosus ssp xantholaimos, built up from a single corm, shows how well the crocus are doing in this small experimental sand bed that I constructed a few years ago – I am thinking about where else in the garden I can incorporate this type of feature.

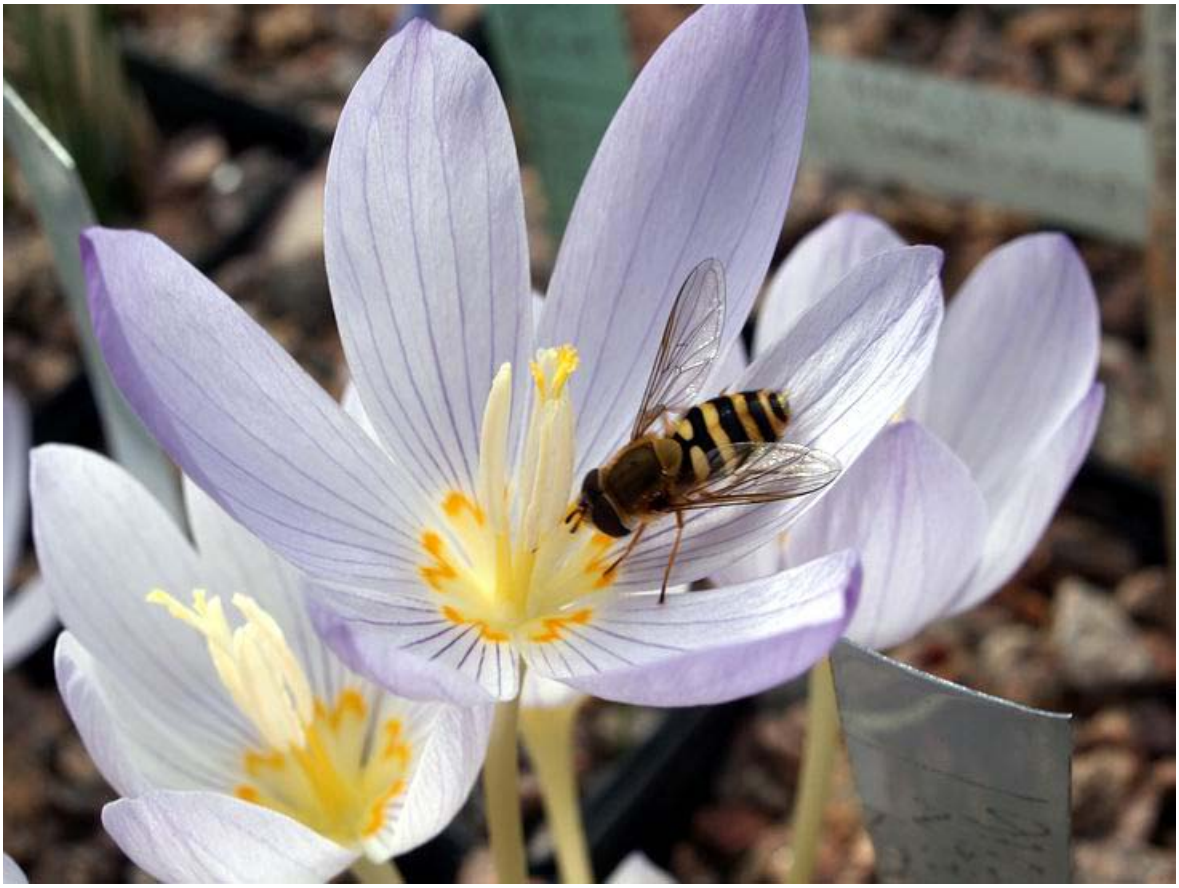


Crocus speciosus ssp xantholaimos

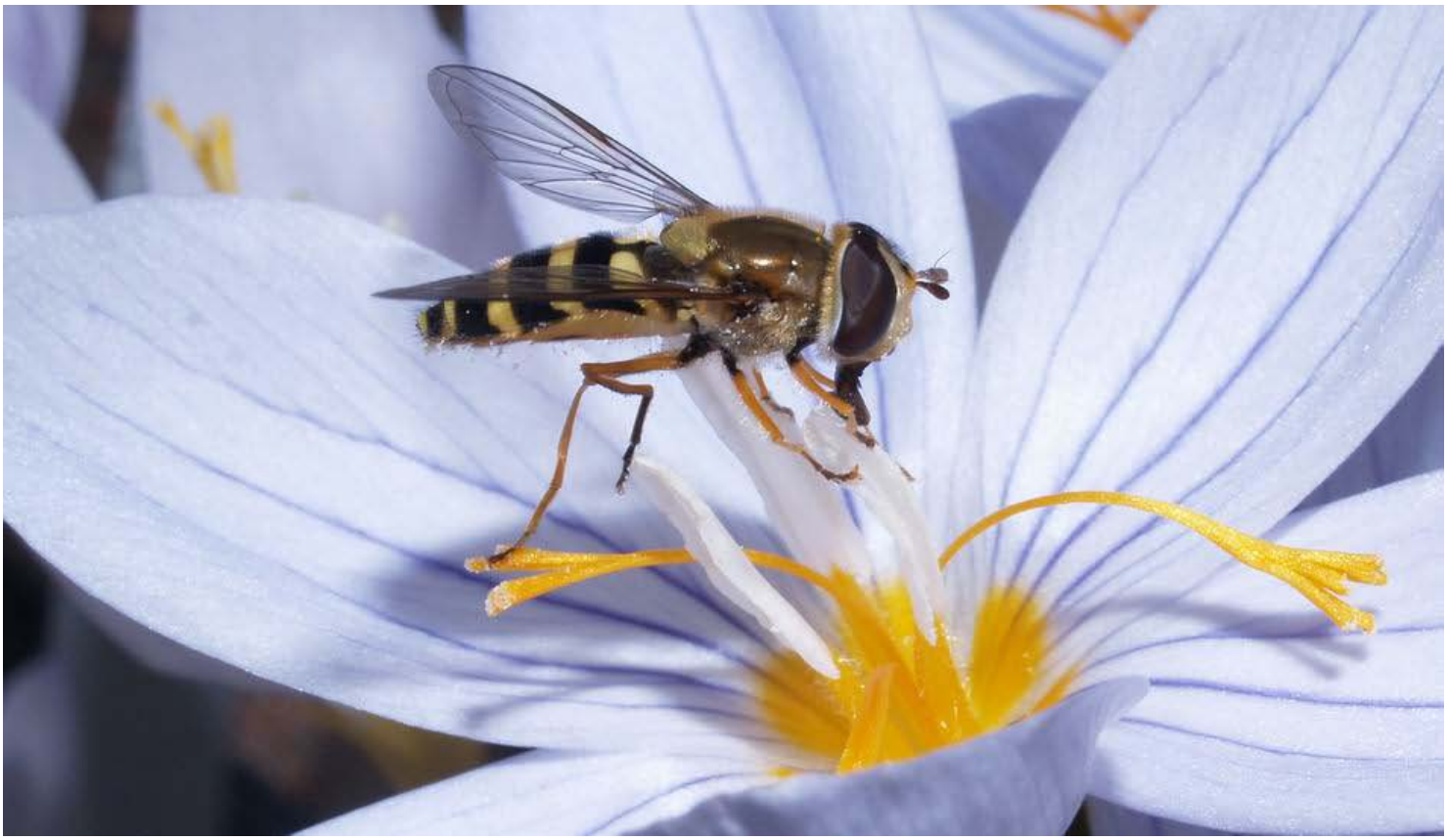
This picture looks into the open flower and shows the yellow throat that typifies ssp xantholaimos – Crocus speciosus usually has a white throat.

Crocus speciosus ssp xantholaimos x pulchellus

In one batch of seedlings that I raised from my own plants of this sub-species I noticed and separated a number of forms that had white pollen. I suspect that these have crossed with the closely related Crocus pulchellus or perhaps Crocus kotschyanus.

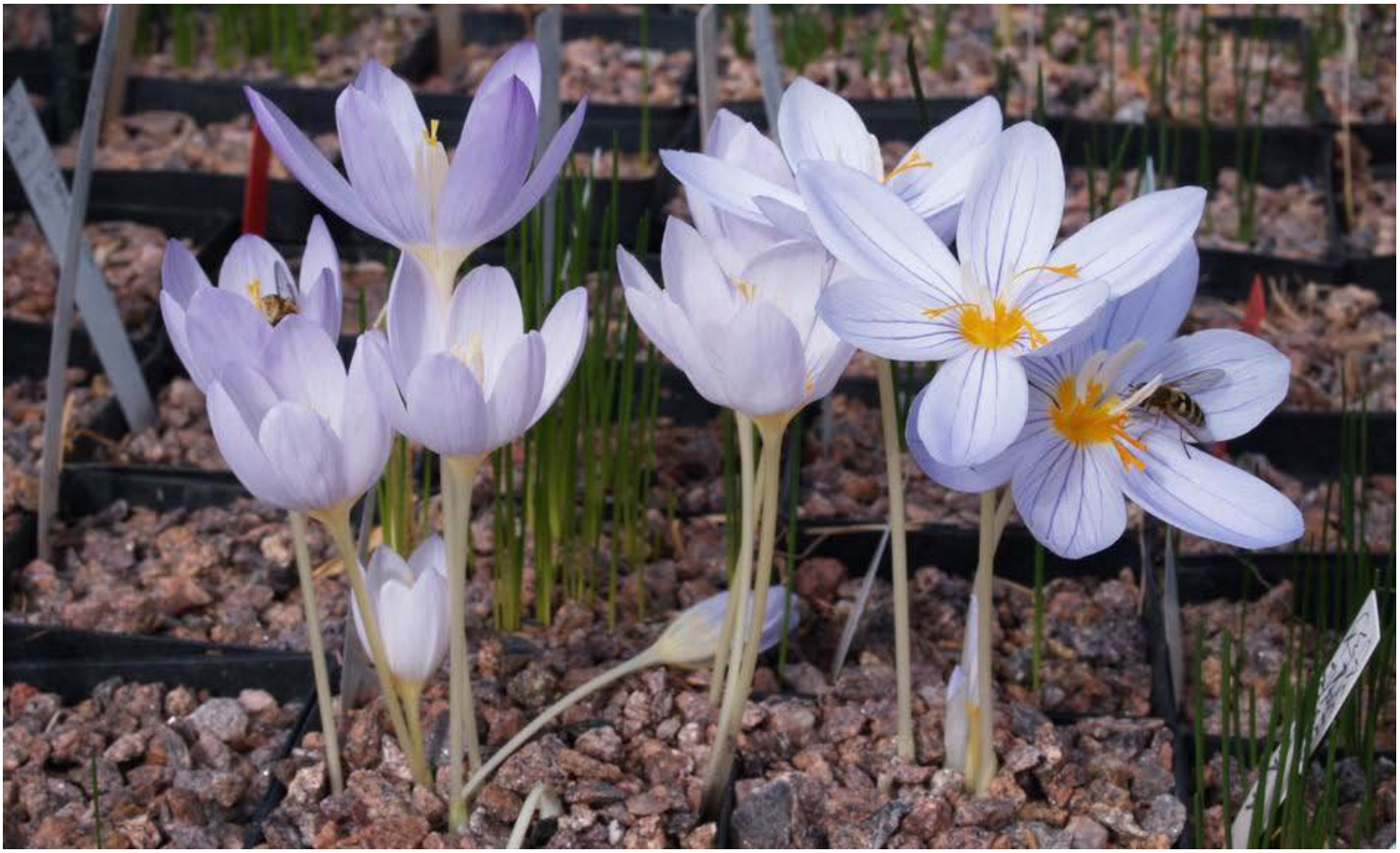


Crocus kotschyanus



Crocus pulchellus

On this day it was not a case of patiently waiting for a hover fly to appear to enhance my picture- more that I would have waited longer to get a picture of a Crocus flower without a fly on it.



Crocus kotschyanus and pulchellus

A pot of Crocus kotschyanus grows happily beside C. pulchellus

Crocus asumaniae

What do you observe in these two Crocus asumaniae flowers both rising from the same corm? The one on the left has two extra floral segments, one extra anther and one extra style branch. Obviously since these are both from the same corm this is not a genetically fixed mutation otherwise both flowers would have extra parts. This mutation must have resulted from some damage to the cells while the bud was in the early stages of growth.

Crocus cambessedessii

Regular readers may remember that I thought that I had lost both my pots of Crocus cambessedessii in the very long cold winter but when I emptied the pots I did find a few corms had survived. This is the lone flower this year from this lovely species and I am pleased to have at least some material left to build back up to greater numbers again.

Erythronium hendersonii seeds

This is a timely reminder that you should be sowing your bulb seeds. Ideally I should havesown these seeds a month ago however my time was all taken up but I am still well within the time window to get optimum germination next spring. To remind you of my method I stored the seeds complete with their seed pods in paper bags in the potting shed.

Erythronium hendersonii seeds dry and soaked

Yesterday I extracted all the seed from the pods and placed them into a plastic pocket to which I added a small amount of water and the smallest amount of soap to break down the surface tension. I will soak the seeds for twenty four hours during which time they will rehydrate and then I will sow them. I was asked a very good question about why I bother to soak Erythronium seed whenI am sowing them now then placing them outside where they have all winter to absorb moisture. It is a reasonable assumption to make that the seeds will plump up quite quickly if exposed to the winter rain but in fact that does not happen. I have trialled identical seeds ;one pot soaked before sowing and the other not. The germination rate of those that were not soaked was sporadic over three years while the pot of soaked seeds had a near 100 % germination in the first spring proving the effectiveness of this simple procedure.

Dactylorhiza tuber

While splitting some of of Dactylorhiza I placed a number into a pot of leaf mould for temporary storage – when I tipped them out last week I noticed a mass of thin thread like filaments near the growing tip -see the close up picture below.

Mycorrhizal fungus on Orchid roots

I believe these to be the mycorrhizal mycelia that have a symbiotic relationship with the orchid -where it breaks down the nutrients in the humus content of the soil in exchange it gets some of the products of photosynthesis from the plant. I am always aware of the distinctive smell of the mycorrhizae when handling the Dactylorhiza tubers as well as the velvety coating of fine thread like hairs but this is the first time I have seen them so clearly on the roots. They are most likely stimulated by the leaf mould that I stored the tubers in.