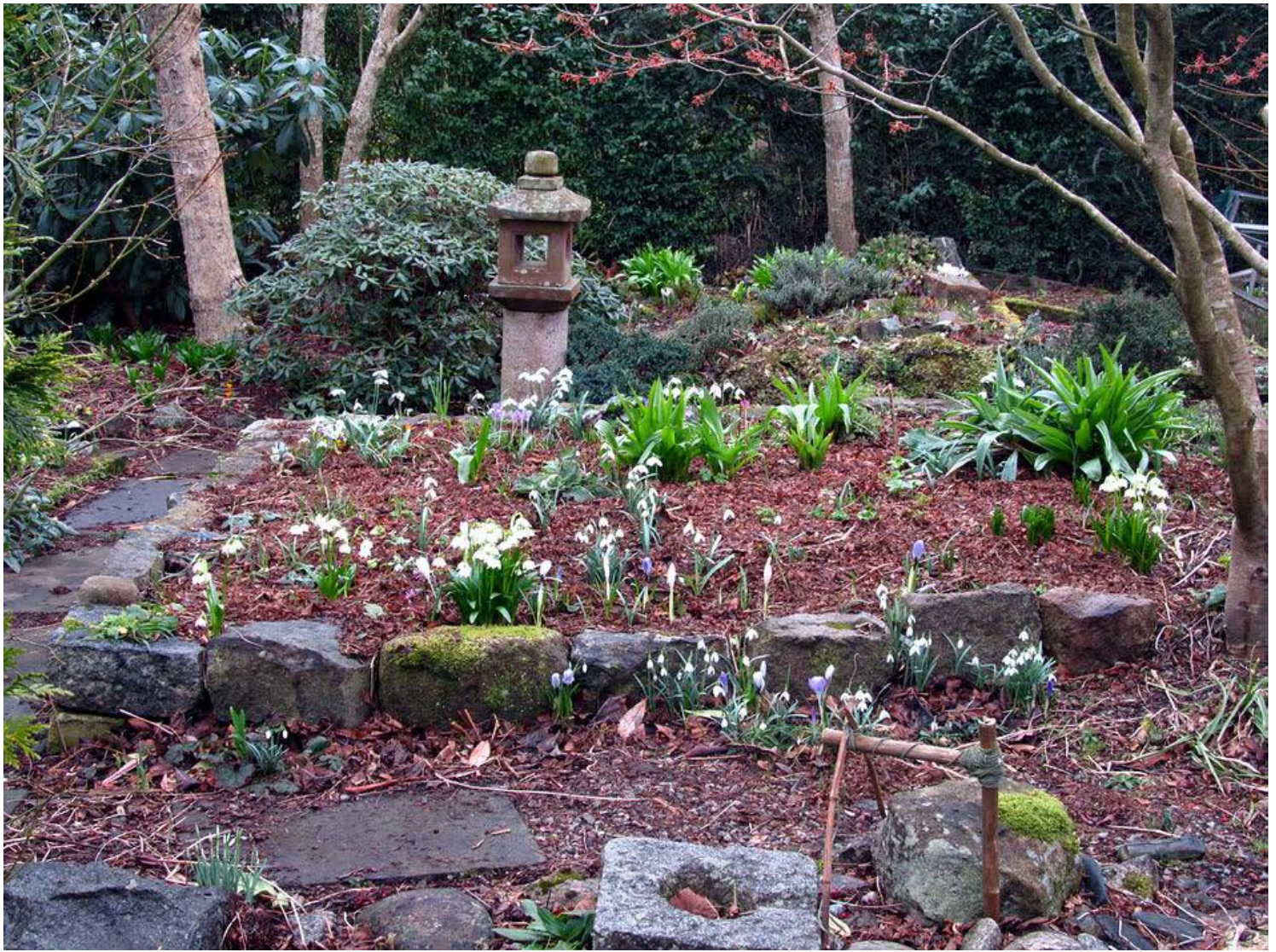




BULB LOG 9.....29th February 2012



Bulb Bed

I normally try to get the pictures for the bulb log taken over a weekend and then write the log in time to post it on Wednesday. This is exactly what I did last week but by the time I posted the snowy pictures the weather had completely changed and from Wednesday on we have been basking in some very unseasonal warmth. The bulbs have sprung into action and I cannot remember a year when the garden changed so quickly from a few flowers to being alive with bloom. Weather predictions are that Aberdeen may record the warmest February day since 1897 this Tuesday – we will see. (*it came close but fell 0.8 short*)



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Snow Drops

The snow drops are all opening their petals and making a wonderful display in the unexpected warmth.



Poculiform Galanthus

I love the variation that we get when raising any bulbs from seed and I do admit that there are quite a number of notable variations in snowdrops. Different forms are always more numerous when a number of species are brought together in a garden and can interbreed. Above is a form where the inner three petals are longer than the norm – these are called poculiform and can be most beautiful when a good stable form is found.



Galanthus

It is always pleasing to see any bulb increase and form a clump but I much prefer to see my bulbs spaced out so that they can display their flowers without touching each other. It is more work to lift and divide every few years but as well as the improved aesthetic effect this regular splitting also encourages better growth as the bulbs and roots are also experiencing less competition. Of course it is not practical to do it with every bulb - we have so many - but in an ideal world I would if I could



Galanthus 'Sandersi'

How much better they can look spaced out like this so we can enjoy this yellow variation of *Galanthus nivalis*.



Leucojum vernum

Above I showed two of the most sought after variations in Galanthus, the poculiform type where the inner and outer floral segments are of equal size and the forms where there are yellow markings in place of the more common green. I have said it before but if that is what you desire then that what you really need is not Galanthus but Leucojum.



Leucojum vernum

I regularly lift and spread this group out so that it does not form a congested clump.



Leucojum vernalis

Compare these flowers to those above and you can see that if you raise your Leucojum from seed you will get variation. Perhaps I should be looking for a form where the inner three petals are much shorter than the outer ones 😊



Crocus abantensis

I like to employ the same method of spacing the crocus out by lifting and dividing the clumps every few years. There is no doubt that doing this speeds up the rate of increase of flowering sized bulbs and also avoids the clumps becoming so congested that they just produce leaves and stop flowering.



Crocus tommasinianus

It is easy to get distracted by trying to collect the rare and sometimes difficult to grow forms or species but we should never lose sight of those that are easy and widely available. *Crocus tommasinianus* is one of those commonly



available species and raising it from seed will result in a wide variation in colour.

Pure white forms like this on the left are always going to be attractive as are the slightly speckled form shown above. Below I show some of the variation of colours in our gravel drive where over the years I have just scattered seeds.

My one problem is that it is so difficult to dig this compacted gravel that I cannot easily

lift and divide the clumps that are forming. I do think that some year soon I will have to take on this task because I would love to have nicely spaced plantings with a mixture of all the colour variations.



Crocus tommasinianus variations from drive



Crocus tommasinianus- a particularly dark form



Above is a yellow **Crocus chrysanthus cultivar** alongside a few self sown seedlings showing colour variation.



Crocus seedling variation

I will never tire of encouraging as many people as possible to grow bulbs from seed –it is one of the most exciting forms of gardening. The young bulbs will not only produce pleasing variations but also display a vigour often lacking in many of the older established bulbs.

Crocus chrysanthus along with *Crocus biflorus* and *C. sieberi* are responsible for many of the forms we see for sale in garden centres both as variations of the species and hybrids between them.



Crocus sieberi tricolor

One of my all time favourites is this colour variation of *Crocus sieberi* with a dark purple tube leading into a deep yellow throat then a white zone before the petals turn a lovely violet/blue.



Crocus biflorus

An interesting point to note can be seen in these two flowers of *Crocus biflorus*. The style on the right hand bloom protrudes well beyond the anthers so there is little chance of the pollen passing to the stigma without a pollinator. As the flower ages the anthers will also extend, as in the one on the left, now it is possible for the flower to pollinate itself even without the attention of a pollinating insect. This same development can be observed in the flowers of various genera of bulbs.



Crocus biflorus ssp. alexandri is noted for not having the yellow throat typical of the type species as can be seen in the flower on the left. This is a group raised from seed from *C. biflorus alexandri* which has hybridised with another form of *C. biflorus* to give this variation in the seedlings – hence some have yellow throats and some do not.



Crocus sieberi 'Hubert Edelsten'

I showed this lovely creature in bud last week now here it is showing its full beauty.



Hot Bed

Another feature that I have been developing for quite a number of years is this narrow bed at the foot of a south facing wall. It is as hot and dry a bed as you are going to find in our garden and to further improve the drainage and the heat in the summer I have raised it up around 10cms using old roofing slates.

I will return to this bed over the next few months to show the range of bulbs that I am growing here and the progression of wonderful flowers that appear.

I will finish off this week's bulb log with a few pictures below showing what is in flower in this bed just now – remember this and I will show how the colours change in coming weeks.

