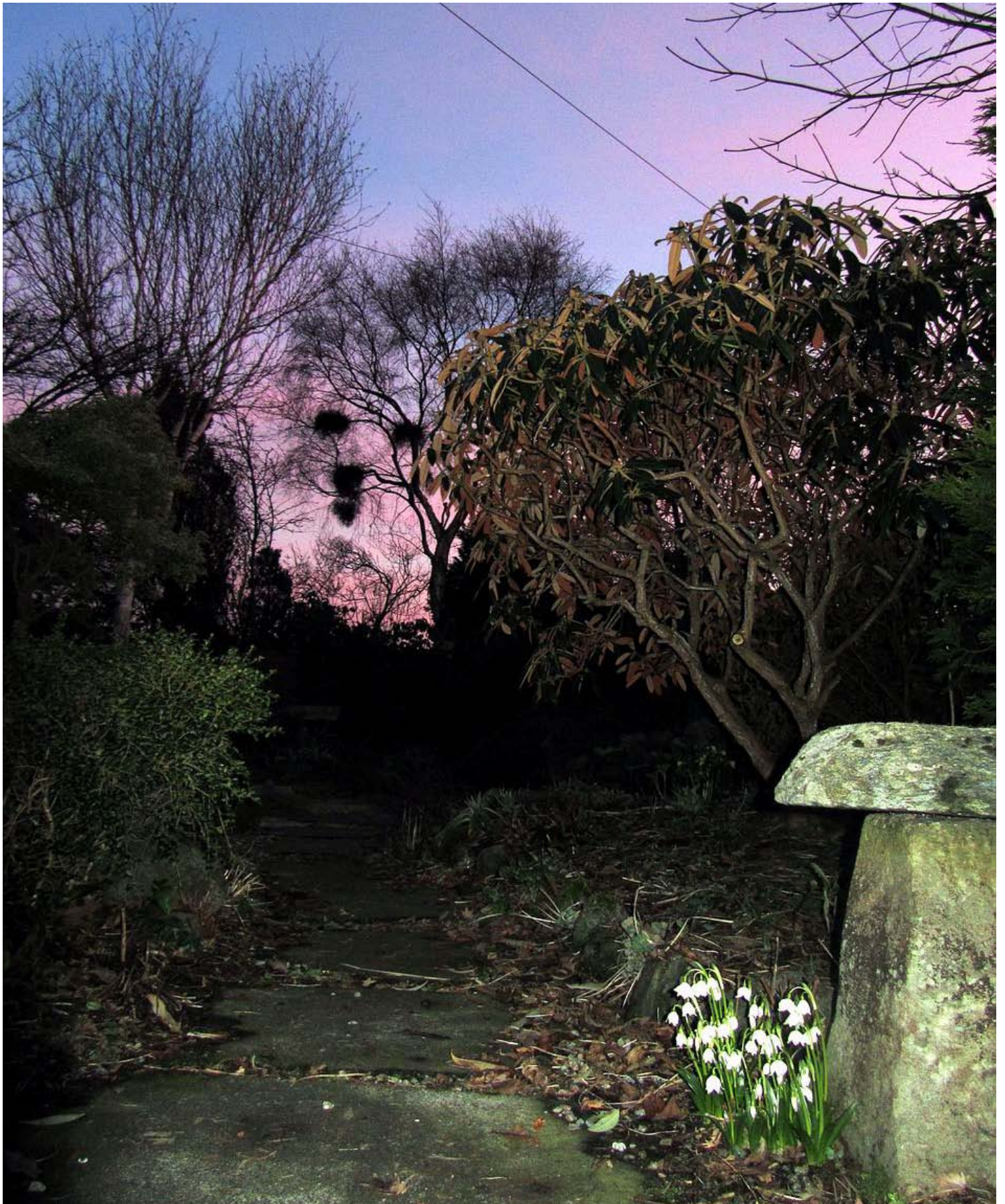




BULB LOG 08..... 20th February 2013



Sunday evening around 5pm the southern sky was illuminated by pink stripes as the clouds were lit from the setting sun – I took the exposure from the sky and used my flash to fill in some foreground detail highlighting the stone mushroom and the group of *Leucojum vernum*.



Leucojum 'Podpolozje'

A closer look at the flowers of *Leucojum 'Podpolozje'* just as they are opening – this is a form from Janis Ruksans that has both twin flowers in mature bulbs and yellow tips to the segments but these can vary from greeny yellow to quite intense yellow depending on conditions.



Over in the bulb bed the first of the snowdrops are about to flower starting off a long season of continual interest in this bed.



Snowdrops



Elsewhere the first of the Western North American Erythroniums is showing both leaf and bud, I cannot remember which one this is but will know when it flowers.



Erythronium caucasicum is always first into flower and right enough when I went to look for it there is a flower that will soon be open - if we get good weather. Sadly this beautiful species is very slow to increase by offsets – there is a small third leaf indicating splitting of the bulb on this plant but that is after some ten years.



Iris histrio is a good do-er and is now in flower in the open garden and under glass.



Crocus abantensis seedlings, raised from Gothenberg seeds, are now in full flower with plenty of ripe pollen. I have been cross pollinating both these seedlings and the clonal colony I have in a raised bed that has never set seed for me. It will be interesting to see if I get seed on it now I am cross fertilising it with these other seedlings.



These **Crocus biflorus** seedlings are from collected seed and the one in bud is the most amazing dark colour unlike any forms of *C. biflorus* I have had before. Such is the pleasure of getting fresh seed of wild origin. Unfortunately wild collected seeds are becoming a thing of the past as more and more countries regulate against seed collecting. I will have to ensure that I keep a steady supply of seed coming from these plants to maintain as wide a genetic variation as I can in cultivation.



Crocus biflorus

Three pictures show another pot of wild seedlings that were puzzling me. In bud I thought it to be a form of the very variable species *Crocus biflorus*, possibly – subsp. *issauricus*- until the flowers opened and revealed white anthers.

After pondering for a while I decided to go back and have a closer look at the flowers and on detailed inspection I found that it was not white pollen that I was seeing - no pollen had formed at all.



I would be very grateful for your thoughts on this and the following *Crocus*



A group of Crocus seed pots in the bulb house showing the very dark *C. biflorus* in the background but now I am showing the two pots in the foreground. On the left just showing over a label is a small pale blue flowered crocus with a yellow throat, below left, which I am thinking could possibly be *Crocus danfordiae*.



***Crocus danfordiae*?**



I am also wondering if the beautiful yellow crocus with the deep purple tube, detailed on the right and below, could also be *Crocus danfordiae*. The flowers of both these are significantly smaller than adjacent pots of *Crocus biflorus* and *C. chrysanthus* flowers.



One thing I do know is these are all very beautiful plants and I am so lucky to have the opportunity to grow them. While curious I am happy to leave the job of trying to classify them to the taxonomists, frankly an almost impossible task. I will however take my responsibility as a grower to maintain them in our garden and to distribute any surplus material as corms or seed to other growers, very seriously.



Narcissus



Now from the problems of naming Crocus I move on to another genus that is full of problems with the naming - Narcissus. The big problem as I see it is that people want to classify and apply an 'order' to plants that have no regard for these attempts of man-made 'rules' that they should adhere to. I get the feeling that Narcissus is a relatively young genera still in rapid evolution with speciation still happening as new variable populations form in the wild that simply do not display the stability in the characteristics that taxonomists use to try and pin them down.

In our collections we bring together many more Narcissus giving them the opportunity, if they are compatible, to inter breed even more. In the wild geographical separation can prevent such crosses happening.

In our bulb houses the hoop petticoat species of Narcissus – the bulbocodium section- inter breed with gay abandon producing masses of slightly variable individuals many of which are fertile and so complex hybrids involving more than two species are also produced. This beautiful small seedling with its greatly exerted style and anthers is a wee beauty and as growers we should never be put off growing them simply because we do not know a name for it.



Narcissus eualbidus



To my eye *Narcissus eualbidus* is one of the most beautiful of all the bulbs I know. I first received it many years ago from the Dr Tom Norman but sadly lost the bulbs in one of our severe winters. The next time I saw it was a few years ago on a trip to Belgium where I saw it growing in bulb house of Luc S. and typical of the generosity of growers, he kindly offered to send me a few seeds and bulbils when he repotted his plant - one year on I now have this stunning plant in flower.

Now the *Naricssus eualbidus* name is not officially valid and I do not know what the true botanical name for this plant is but I will forever associate it with the two great plantsmen who shared it with me.



I have often read that **Narcissus romieuxii 'Joy Bishop'** with its lobed corona does not always flower well – as you can see this is not the case here. There is a tendency for the bulbs of these small Narcissus to break down into many small non-flowering bulbs if you do not water and feed them enough at the critical phases of growth. These critical phases are on root emergence in the autumn, during the rapid leaf and flower growth when sufficient water must be available and, as the flowers fade, I will also add Potassium to help build next year's flower buds.



Here is an unnamed Narcissus seedling cloned out from a mixed pot with another clone from the same pot below.



A brief few days with sunshine encouraged masses of Narcissus and Crocus flowers to open in the bulb houses before heavy dark clouds returned bringing all too familiar miserable wet conditions.....