



BULB LOG 43.....23rd October 2013



Around the time that *Erythronium dens-canis* is flowering we can also expect to see the first of the North American species come to flower. *Erythronium hendersonii* is nearly always the first followed by *E. revolutum* with the peak flowering of *Erythronium* in our garden coming in mid to late April.



The *Erythronium*s grow happily in exactly the same beds as all the other bulbs I have mentioned so far as they all enjoy the woody type soil and the cool moist conditions our garden has to offer.

You might wonder what happens in this bed after this spring show – well there are plenty more bulbous plants to still come -it only looks empty during the winter months – read on.



Fritillaria pallida in particular is a wonderful garden plant gracing the beds with its large multiple hanging bells of straw yellow with deep purple spots in the centre growing side by side with *Fritillaria pyrenaica*, *F. tubiformis*, *F. acmopetala* and many others.



F. tubiformis



Over the years we are trying more of the Fritillaria that we have grown under glass out in the open garden and to date have always been pleased to watch how well they grow when released – embarrassingly they sometimes grow better in the garden where they do not have to rely on our attention. For a number of years now we have been trialling growing bulbs in beds just sharp sand with amazing success – all the bulbs we have tried in this medium have thrived and we are encouraged to try more of the so called ‘difficult’ species.



While our cool moist climate suits many bulbs we do not do so well with those that come from hot dry habitats but we have succeeded with some in a narrow bed at the base of a south facing wall which offers the hottest driest conditions you are going to get in our open garden. We have to grow the species that require a proper dry summer rest in one of our glass bulb houses.



Back in the general garden another woodland genus the Trilliums love growing up through a carpet of Dicentra and Corydalis and when you look at the structure of the plant with a long stem, at the top of which you will see the leaves and flowers, they have evolved in exactly this kind of situation and like so many bulbs do better when growing in communities than they do when grown as an isolated specimen plant.





I spoke earlier of using all three dimensions when planting your garden and now I remind you that gardens are four dimensional – one bed can and should be used fully to deliver as much interest for as many weeks of the year as possible



The beds that had so much colour in the spring do not look empty as they start to die back with the approach of summer because their

retreating leaves are replaced by the emerging shoots of summer flowering 'bulbous' plants such as *Dactylorhiza* orchids, forests of *Arisaema* and beautiful *Roscoea* species.

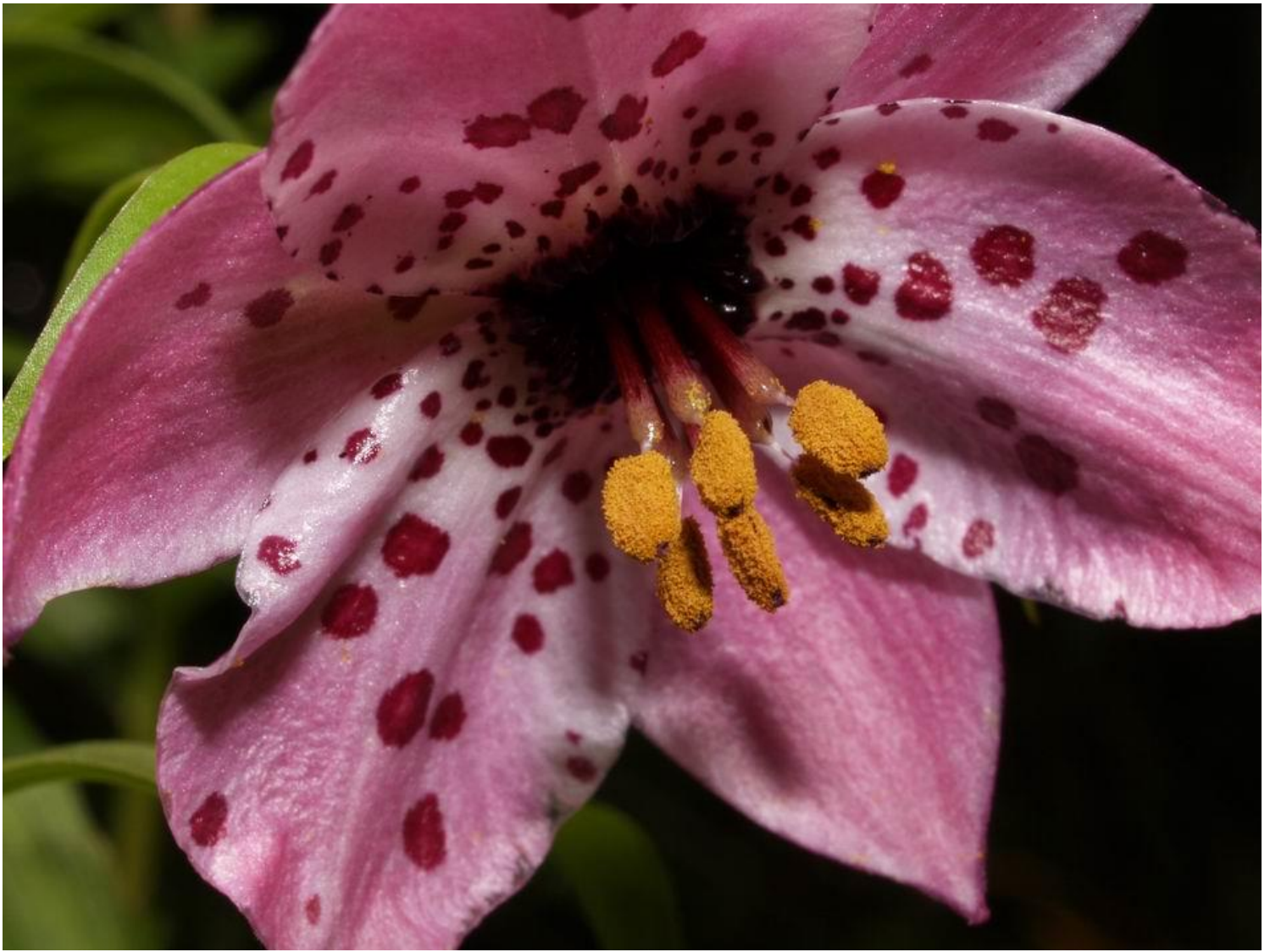


We continue to develop our mixed beds by observing them during the year watching for gaps that appear, both in space and time, that could be filled by adding another plant to the community. There is no reason why you need different beds for different seasons as the correct choice of plants will give you almost perpetual interest.



Roscoea humeana comes in a range of colours from very dark forms that can appear almost black through the most typical purple to purest white as seen below.





Nomocharis with their stunningly spotted flowers are a must for any early summer garden and Lilies of all types can give us flowers from spring through until early autumn. They are easy from seed which is readily available in exchanges and you can get flowers in three years from germination.



Late flowering Alliums along with Lilies further extend the bulb flowering year.

By August we can often detect the first signs of autumn – humans follow the year by the calendar months and often discuss how some flowers are later or earlier than ‘normal’ but it is important that we understand the plants do not follow this calendar- they respond to seasonal conditions - changes in temperature, moisture and light levels – there is no ‘normal’.



The passing of summer is celebrated by the blooming of *Cyclamen purpurascens* followed closely by *C. hederifolium* and these can flower right up until the heavy frosts and snow arrive in November.





Colchicum are another classic of the autumn flowering bulbs in our garden and we make full use of them always planting them carefully to take into account that their leaves will appear in the spring. Please do not refer to these beautiful flowers, as they are all too often called, 'autumn crocus' –it is one of my pet hates as they are nothing at all to do with Crocus and if you do call Colchicums 'autumn crocus' then what are we to call the genuine autumn crocus of which there are many such as *Crocus nudiflorus*, **C. speciosus**, *C. kotschyanus*, *C. vallicola* etc. all of which grow well in our garden.



By now we are entering the winter months and most bulbous plants retreat underground completely but Cyclamen and a few species of *Corydalis* have leaves throughout the winter reminding us that they are there as well as giving the garden some winter decoration before the whole cycle starts off again in a little over a month's time.