



BULB LOG 09.....26<sup>th</sup> February 2014

**Seed time**

It is always exciting when seed arrives as this batch did just the day before I left to speak at the World of Bulbs 5 in Birmingham last week. I quickly sorted it into types and made labels - all the Narcissus and Crocus were soaked overnight in water to which I added a tiny amount of soap, just enough to break the surface tension.



I find milk bottle tops are ideal for this as they can be placed in the pot ready to be sown the next day. Make sure the seed sinks into the water – sometimes it just floats on the surface but a stir around should submerge it as above.



The next day the seed will have plumped up and it is my experience that soaking stored seed like this improves both the rate and the speed of germination.

You will also notice that I have barely half filled the pots with compost that is because I always sow Crocus and Narcissus seeds deep, at least half way down in the pot.



### **Narcissus bulbocodium**

It enjoyed my trip to Birmingham and was pleased to have feedback and encouragement from many there who follow the Bulb Log. Even though I was traveling light with only a small cabin baggage allowance I could not resist buying this lovely Narcissus bulbocodium which has the most green on the petals and the tube that I have seen.

I have done quite a bit of pollinating since I came home using pollen from this plant in the hope that I can get this green feature into other forms – that is if the weather is conducive to seed set. Up until now the weather has been so cold and damp that the pollen rotted on the anthers and even when the pollen was good it was too cold for it to grow down and fertilise the seed. In fact it has been so damp that as soon as the flowers start to go over they become saturated with water, I can wring them out, and so I have had to remove them to prevent grey moulds from harming the plants.





**Removed Narcissus flowers**



**Bulb bed**

The light levels and temperature are now rising and it is amazing how flowers have sprung up in the few days I have been down south – the garden is bursting in to bloom.



Bulbs have evolved to come into flower quickly capitalising on a short growing season – snow drops are everywhere.



The silver leaves of a Celmisia make a suitable foreground with groups of Galanthus in the background.



**Corydalis malkensis**



**Eranthis 'Guinea Gold'**



We have built up quite a lot of the beautiful **Eranthis 'Guinea Gold'** by growing them in a leafy soil in fish box troughs – this makes it easy to replant and split these every year which helps speed up the rate of increase. Every year I plant the surplus from the troughs into the garden.



More snowdrops mostly of the *Galanthus plicatus* persuasion.



The green markings of **Galanthus 'Snoopy'** imply a little face – hence the name Ian Christie chose for this fine drop.



**Leucojum and Galanthus**



**Leucojum vernum**



**Iris 'Katharine Hodgkin'**

Another plant that benefits from and increases quicker if it is lifted and divided every year is Iris 'Katharine Hodgkin' – here it is seen with Corydalis and Galanthus.





***Iris reticulata***

I have been trying out many selections of *Iris reticulata* in an attempt to find forms that will flower regularly and increase in our garden –these have been in this bed for around six years now and I intend to spit them up this year.



**Iris 'Blue Eyes' in the centre with Iris 'Blue Note' at either side.**



**Iris histrioides 'Major' with Galanthus woronowii and Crocus herberti in the background.**



**Iris 'Katharine Hodgkin'**



**Iris Shelia Ann Germaney'**



A new plant that we got as a bulb last year under the name of **Iris wingradowii alba** is very nice. It is flowering earlier than the normal yellow *I. wingradowii* and I am not convinced that it is a white form – perhaps a hybrid – Whatever the species it is a very nice plant.



Here is one growing in a sand bed with *Cyclamen coum* and *Galanthus* 'Elizabeth Harrison'



I am so pleased with the way the sand beds have turned out and if I had my time again I would make many more.



Sand bed



**Erythronium caucasicum**

The first *Erythronium caucasicum* is flowering this species is rare in cultivation but easy to grow, the only difficulty is getting hold of it. It is rarely offered either as seed or bulbs – if you see any offered grab the opportunity.....