





Narcissus romieuxii

The first Narcissus flower for this season has opened in the sand bed of the bulb house where I have planted all sorts of small bulbs directly into the sand without any labels so naming them is going to be fun. From the flower and the shape of the leaves this is most likely a form or hybrid of *Narcissus romieuxii* but we do not need to know the name to enjoy these wee treasures. This is the time of year when many a gardener is

closing the gate to their garden for the winter shut down - in our type of garden with the plants we grow there is no shut down. The bulbs we grow under glass are going to provide us with flowering interest all the way through the winter months until the spring flowering garden wakens up.



Bulb house

It is a common failing not to water and feed these winter growing bulbs enough and that is why many fail to get their bulbs up to flowering size. A daily task is to remove any Crocus flowers as they collapse to minimise the risk of grey mould.

I only managed to re-pot a small number of our bulbs this year because I spent much time building the new plunge staging so I am aware that some may need additional feeding. I watch the leaves to see how strong their growth looks and how green they are – pale, slow growing leaves may be a sign that they are short of nitrogen. As the leaves are appearing I have been adding a very dilute, less than ¼ of the recommended strength, liquid tomato type liquid feed to the pots that were not replanted this summer. I will not do this every time I water as I do not think bulbs need high levels of nitrogen –it can be detrimental making their growth soft and more vulnerable to disease and infection.



Sternbergia leaves

I continue to try and find a way to get our Sternbergias to flower better and I have thought that their growth cycle may require more feeding before the onset of winter than other bulbs do so I am adding the very dilute feed, described above, every time I water them. I will continue this until the weather turns cold and slows their growth down; then in the spring I will stop the nitrogen and just add a potassium supplement.



Crocus laevigatus

I can never have enough *Crocus laevigatus* - their wide open flowers sit on short stems making it a perfect subject for growing in pots where they will flower through most of the winter.



Crocus laevigatus



Autumn grips the garden with the fiery red colours on the Acer lifting this scene as the growth from the bulb beds turns first yellow then brown as it dies back. How much cutting back and cleaning up I do depends on what else is in the bed. If there are plants still in leaf I will clean away any dying foliage so that it does not flop on and damage them.



It is through the winter that you appreciate the structural plants in the garden such as trees, shrubs and *Celmisia*.



Celmisia

The fallen leaves make an attractive colourful carpet but I do not leave them too long around such plants as Celmisias and dwarf Ericaceous plants.

The leaf blower/ sucker that I have works best when the leaves are dry. It not only lifts the leaves it also shreds them - but only if they are dry. Wet leaves very quickly clog up the shredder part and stop it working.





Once shredded the leaves will break down very quickly in the compost and be ready to add to our potting mix next summer.



I find many interesting and colourful vignettes while tidying the leaves and cutting back – such as this *Anemone ranunculoides*. I doubt very much if we have a new discovery of an autumn flowering form just an individual that has become confused with the seasons.



Slightly chewed Cyclamen leaves with more of autumn's debris can be as colourful and attractive as fresh spring flowers.



Eucomis leaves become increasing chewed.



Even the giant leaves of **Podophyllum pleianthum** have a decorative charm as they turn brown and collapse.



Podophyllum 'Spotty Dotty' is among the most decorative of this genus.



Another view across the garden shows the benefit of having plants that provide all year round structure so the garden keeps its shape and form no matter what the season.



Allium wallichii

In the foreground are the stems of *Allium wallichii* that are just starting to shed their seeds. Not collecting all the seeds has allowed a single small clump planted as a pot of seedlings many years ago to colonise this area of the garden seeding into both the beds and the gravel path.



Garden view



Corydalis 'Craigton Blue'

In the front garden a new growth of leaves appear on Corydalis 'Craigton Blue' and the old flower stems of are now turning yellow - it is best to remove these with a sharp upwards tug.



Job done the new leaves can now be appreciated contrasting with those of the Celmisia.



Some plants of **Croydalis 'Craigton Blue'** are growing so happily since they were divided last year that they have produced more flowers - these will last until the frosts get severe.



***Croydalis* 'Craigton Blue'**



The colours of autumn are also expressed in the ripe seed capsule of ***Paeonia cambessedesii***.



Ophiopogon planiscapus nigrescens with fallen Cotoneaster berries and backlit Epimedium leaves make another attractive autumnal sight that will reward those that are happy to garden every day of the year and not just in spring and summer.....