



BULB LOG 30.....29th July 2015





This picture brings together all the tasks I am currently working on in the garden clipping trees and hedges, re-potting the bulbs plus admiring Dactylorhiza flowers which are a major feature in our garden at this time of year.



In the background of the previous picture you can see the bulb houses full of pots of bulbs, still with the dried up leaves, in their summer rest. I would like to repot them all every year as they will increase and grow better if I do but I simply cannot manage that however have learned that with additional feeding I can get away with doing them every two or three years so I aim to do around a half to a third each year. I have now made a start with the pots of seed raised bulbs that have not yet been re-potted since they were sown; like these Narcissus confusus.



The other major seasonal work is the cutting of the hedges and the pruning of the trees. I have clipped all the hedges now - all the clippings were shredded and are now composting to form a humus-rich mulch which I will spread over the beds sometime during the winter, now I am working my way through the conifers. It is not necessary to prune or clip conifers - I could just leave this *Chamaecyparis obtuse nana gracilis* but it would form a dense outline more like a large bush than a 'dwarf' tree - so every year I clip it in imitation of the fabulous Japanese-style cloud pruned trees. Opening up the structure to form layers of foliage makes it look much more like a dwarf tree than a large

bush. Yes it is a dwarf when you compare it to the type species which at thirty plus years old, as this one is, would be a tree of 35m tall with a trunk up to 1 m in diameter. I start pruning at the top of the tree and work my way down clipping back most of the new season's shoots, as well as removing any growth that grows downwards from a branch, with the intention of defining the layers. It is important to start shaping a conifer at an early age as the majority of them will not break buds from older wood - that is wood where there is no active green growth.



With a few exceptions all the many **Dactylorhiza** that we grow in our garden have arisen as self-sown seedlings.

These two pictures show the summer phase of the early spring bed where we started the year with *Eranthis* and *Galanthus* way back in February – now it is like a jungle with *Arisaema*, *Uvularia* and *Dactylorhiza* along with some of the larger *Corydalis* species. It has become a bit too much of a jungle and I intend to do some major lifting and dividing in the next few months' time - if the weather allows.





The first impressions are that all the *Dactylorhiza* flowers are the same, that is until you really start to observe the colours, the shapes and sizes of the spikes, then you will focus in and see the variations of the individual flowers within this garden hybrid swarm.



The white one is *Dactylorhiza* 'Eskimo Nell' and the one with the very long inflorescence is the one we named 'Craigton Spire' - see more of these plants in this [Bulb Log video diary supplement -Dactylorhiza orchids.](#)



Here they combine with *Corydalis* and *Celmisia* to form a lovely spectacle.

The clump on the left now needs to be lifted and divided – failure to act will mean the rate of flowering will start to drop off and the congested growth of the foliage makes them more vulnerable to bacterial and fungal infections.



These are probably *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*.



Paler forms.



A lovely colourful combination with Corydalis 'Craigton Blue' Dactylorhiza and various colour forms of Primula florindae.

Primula florindae
yellow form.



Primula florindae

Primula florindae is a really good robust primula whose flowers come in a range of colours from the pale lemon yellow above through orange to deep reds.

All have the added attraction of having a paler coloured face – the result of a layer of mealy indumentum which also covers the pedicles and the calyx – as if that was not enough they also have a gorgeous scent. If grown by the edge of water they can grow very big indeed but they are also quite tolerant of conditions with



less water where they will not grow quite so large. In the occasional hot dry periods we get they can wilt - flopping onto the ground but they soon pick up again when the rain comes or we water them.



More Dactylorhiza orchids surround an informal grouping of troughs which includes some of the small ones that we use for growing Rhodohypoxis.

Rhodohypoxis baurii

All the troughs we grow the Rhodohypoxis in are small enough to be lifted under cover so they can dry out for the winter when they are completely dormant.

For some reason these troughs are still dominated by a single colour, I will sort that when I replant them this winter and mix the colour up as I much prefer that effect.

Rhodohypoxis baurii

The majority of the bulbs we grow follow a 'Mediterranean' type climate so their roots start to grow during the autumn rains and are active all through the winter going dormant in late spring as the temperatures rise and the ground dries. Rhodohypoxis come from a summer wet climate so their roots do not start to grow until the spring and are active all through the summer.



Another group of troughs, some of which are recently made and landscaped.



**Campanula
persicifolia
and
Tropaeolum
speciosum**



We never introduced the typical form of *Campanula persicifolia* to our garden but we did get **Campanula nitida alba** from Jack Drake's nursery many years ago and that seeded around. We soon discovered that the majority of

the seedlings reverted to the standard form with only a very small percentage having this dwarfing gene as seen above. Although I fondly hang on to the old name it is now classified as **Campanula persicifolia var. planiflora**



Campanula cochlearifolia



Campanula garganica

We have never flowered the smaller campanulas particularly well before – I always thought they did not get enough heat or sun but here we are in one of the coldest wettest Julys we have had (already double the average rain fall) and these two are flowering as well as they have ever done. The only thing I have changed is that I did feed the areas they are growing in with some general fertiliser in spring so perhaps I have been guilty of starving them.



Lilium martagon (above) is also in flower as is **Roscoea alpina** (below) which is forming a nice self-seeded colony in the same rock garden bed as the *Campanula cochlearifolia*.





As you can see I have now completed the first phase of the pruning but I always go back over it to further refine the shape. See this tree and some of the flowers in the driveway in this [Bulb Log video diary supplement](#).....