

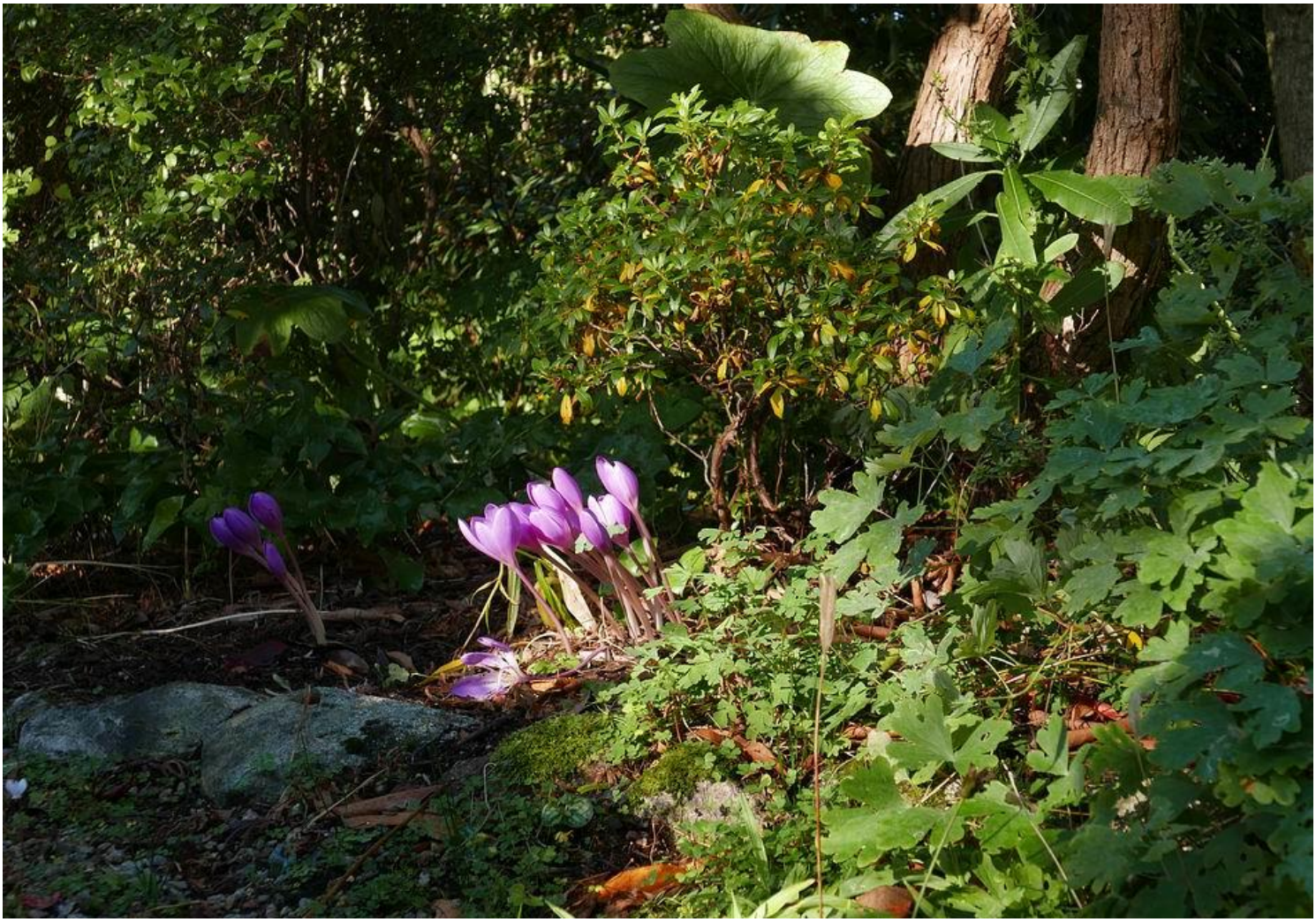
BULB LOG 40.....5th October 2016

Colchicum speciosum
The cover image illustrates these Colchicum flowers fulfilling their purpose of attracting pollinators which are then rewarded by a food source as well as a warm place in which to eat it – in return they transfer the pollen. The flowers act as a solar heater and you will find that in sunshine the temperature inside the flower will be some degrees warmer than it is outside.
Gardeners are also drawn to their beauty and we use them decoratively to add colour to the autumn garden.

Colchicum speciosum
The dark colour of the flower continues down the tubes of this form of Colchicum speciosum.

Even as the Colchicum flowers collapse on the ground they continue to open in the sunshine and add colour to the beds, this is a hybrid with tessellated flowers.

Colchicum x agrippinum



A Group of the dark tubed **Colchicum speciosum** is picked out in a shaft of the low autumn light.

Colchicum speciosum album flowers add brightness into areas even when it is dull or when they are in shade, however they sparkle showing their full beauty when bathed in sunshine as shown below.

Colchicum speciosum album

A group of **Colchicum x agrippinum** in the front garden where we try to achieve a very natural style of planting even though some of the plants may never be found together in the wild.

Colchicum x agrippinum

Crocus and Colchicum

For the avoidance of any doubt, on the far left is an Autumn Crocus with an Autumn Colchicum to its right.

I have no problems with most common names for plants in fact they can serve a valuable purpose in encouraging people to know plants also they often reveal interesting links to a medicinal use - but I have always been very much against calling Colchicums ‘Autumn Crocus’. To me the big problems in using that all too commonly used mis-name is firstly that it uses the botanic name Crocus when referring to Colchicum and secondly what then should the true Autumn Crocus be called?

It should be that we use the name of Autumn Crocus only for Crocus and as there are also spring and autumn Colchicum use Autumn Colchicum for that genus.

Crocus and Colchicum

In most cases you can tell from the flower size and shape whether it is a Crocus or a Colchicum but if in doubt one of the quickest and easiest differences to spot is Crocus have three anthers while Colchicum have six anthers.

Crocus asumaniae

Although I raised this from seed received as Crocus mathewii I believe this to be Crocus asumaniae.

Just look at the number of flowers you get, five so far, rising from a single corm.

Crocus speciosus xantholaimos

Chewed remains of Crocus

The mice are on the rampage again eating our Crocus, mostly from this sand bed where it is all too easy for them to dig. I am applying a dual approach, firstly trying to reduce the number of mice – the other solution I am going to try came to me while observing the small trough nearby - I showed it last week with the Crocus vallicola growing in it. It is landscaped with small stones which allow the bulbs to grow through but would hinder the mice from digging so I am going to get some similar sized stones to completely cover this sand bed

Crocus in the front drive.

Crocus banaticus and Crocus kotschyanus are two of the Crocus that we have sown into the front drives. Here they are growing up through and supported by the Geranium foliage and the corms are safe from the mice because the gravel layer is so deep and hard packed that it is extremely difficult to dig.

Crocus banaticus

Each of the Crocus banaticus seedlings shows a slight variation on the colour scheme and after a few years some of them start to form a small clonal clump.
We still have a slug and snail problem in this area!

Crocus banaticus

Crocus banaticus

Crocus speciosus

This lovely dark form of Crocus speciosus is growing under the foliage of Eucomis bicolor and one of the flowers has taken advantage of a hole chewed by a snail and grown through the Eucomis leaf.

A flower bud of Crocus kotschyanus can be seen in the fore ground.

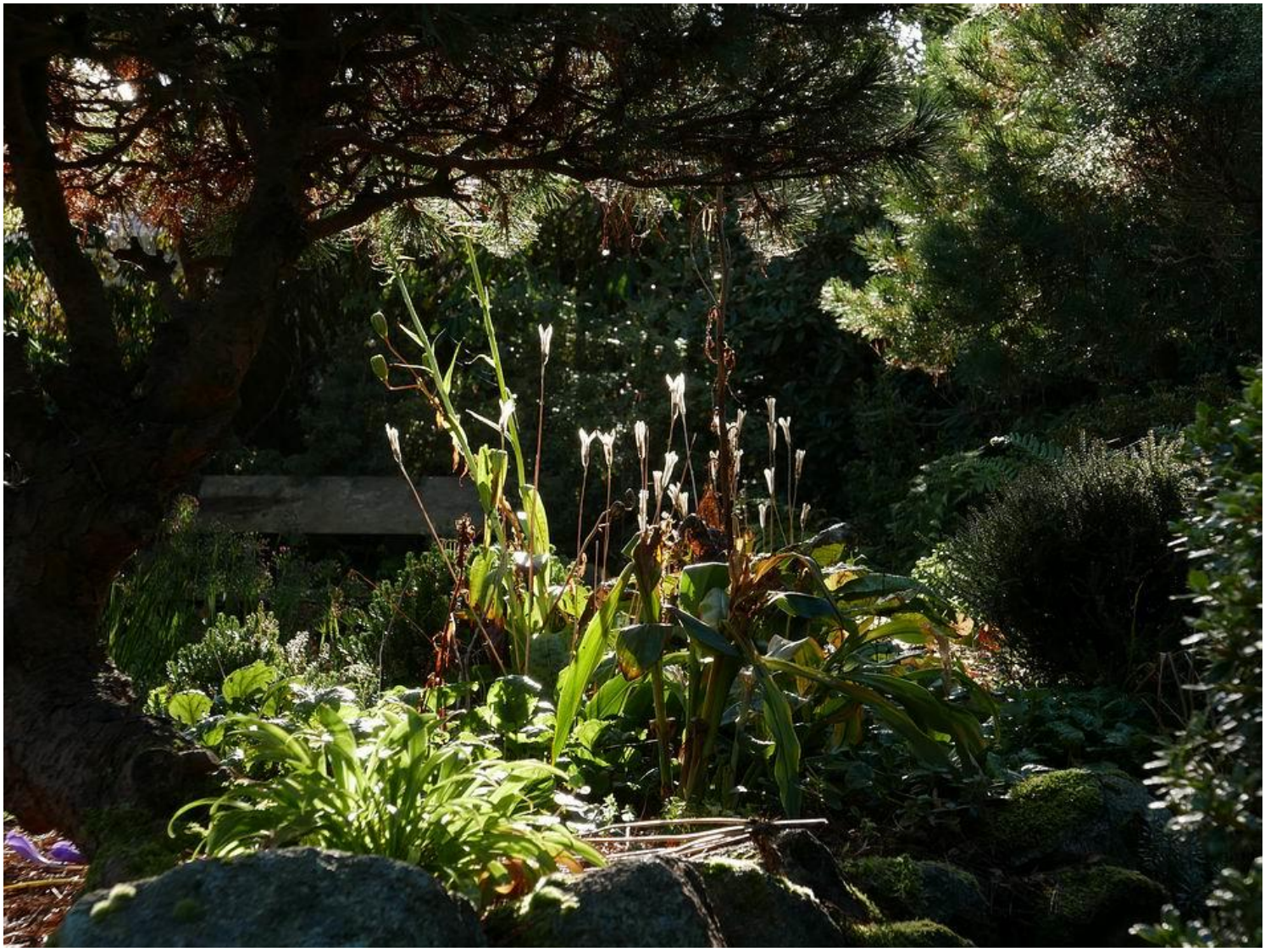
A mixed group of Autumn Crocus growing through the retreating leaves of two of the smaller species of Roscoea has a naturalistic feel.

In the front garden the lovely foliage of **Aciphylla glaucescens** adds interest all year round although we do have to be cautious when we approach or work around it because it has needle sharp leaves.

Celmisia semicordata

This plant of Celmisia semicordata has grown happily in this spot for well over ten years however this year it has rotted out. The leaves looked sick and today when I tugged the central leaves they just slid out of the rotten centre.
It may have been the weather but it has survived similar conditions in previous years or it could be that the plants are mortal like us and have a life span. Sometimes we have unreasonable expectations of our plants expecting them to flower well every year and to live for ever but that is not the way it is.

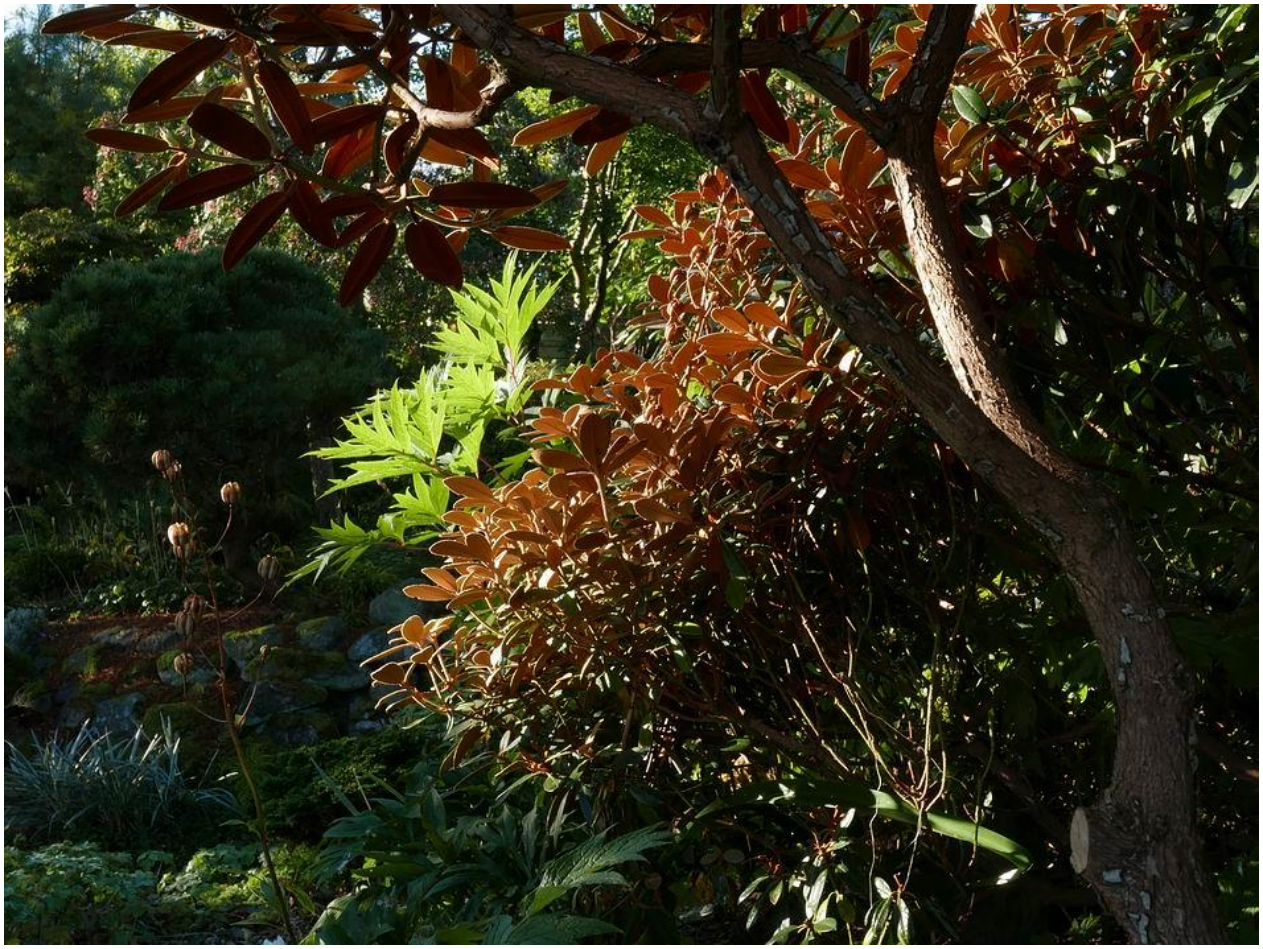
Another younger plant of **Celmisia semicordata** is perfectly healthy and growing not far from the dead one so it seems unlikely that it was the weather conditions alone that caused its demise.



More images illustrating how the magical low autumn light changes the garden by the second as different areas are in the spotlight.

Erythronium seed stems

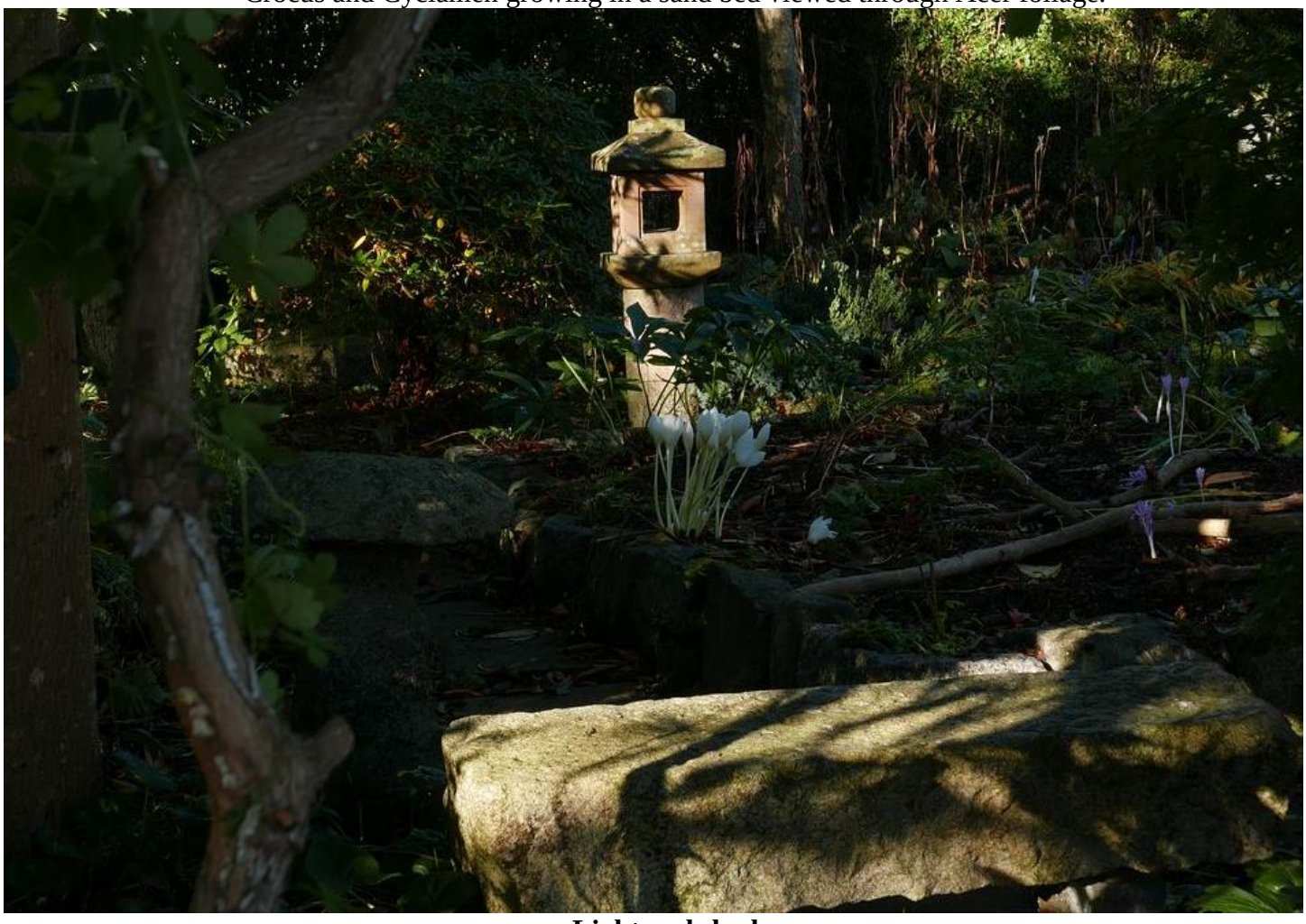
I was fascinated to observe these dried Erythronium seed stems vibrating violently in a light breeze which would shake any remaining seed out of the capsule.
I tried to capture it in this very short Bulb log video diary supplement.



For most of the day this scene of Rhododendron and Paeonia lutea ludlowii foliage would be unremarkable but for a short time the low light turned it into something special as the light shone through the Paeonia leaf making it stand out.

Similarly this single Primula seed head was in the spotlight, picked out against the shaded background, for around three minutes before it slipped back into the shade.

Crocus and Cyclamen growing in a sand bed viewed through Acer foliage.



Light and shade.

I will finish off this week with a picture that combines the topics of Colchicum and light together……
Click this link to see a Bulb Log video diary supplement with Autumn Crocus and Autumn Colchicum.