SRGC ----- Bulb Log Diary -----

BULB LOG 41.....12th October 2016

We have grown this as **Colchicum speciosum album** for many years but unlike other forms of this species we grow it has never increased. There are always plenty of flowers which rise up from what would appear to be a single bulb. It is a similar situation with the nearby tessellated one which we received as Colchisum variegatum although here the flowers are spaced out. When it first flowered it looked very like Colchicum agrippinum to me however it has been in that spot for twenty plus years without ever being split while elsewhere in the garden similarly aged plantings of Colchicum autumnale and Colchicum agrippinum have been divided several times. Whatever these are I will continue to enjoy their flowers that come as most foliage is dying back.

A group of Colchicum x agrippinum that was spilt from a congested clump last year with a few bulbs being planted back here and the others spread around the garden.

The autumn garden has its own character where there is a mixture of foliage and growth dying back in preparation for winter, late flowering plants like Eucomis bicolor plus the early flowering bulbs like Colchicum and Crocus in full bloom.
While many call them late flowering bulbs I use the term ‘early flowering’ to describe these Colchicum and Crocus species because all species form their flowers in the spring/summer the difference is that the flowers of the autumn flowering ones expand and bloom now while the flowers of the spring flowering ones remain in miniature waiting for a different trigger before they display their flowers later next spring.

New Colchicum and Crocus flowers alongside the decaying and chewed leaves bearing all the scars of the season make this unmistakably an autumn scene. The remains of the leaves will be left to decay and return to the soil or be lifted and placed on the compost heap to be recycled and returned to the ground later.

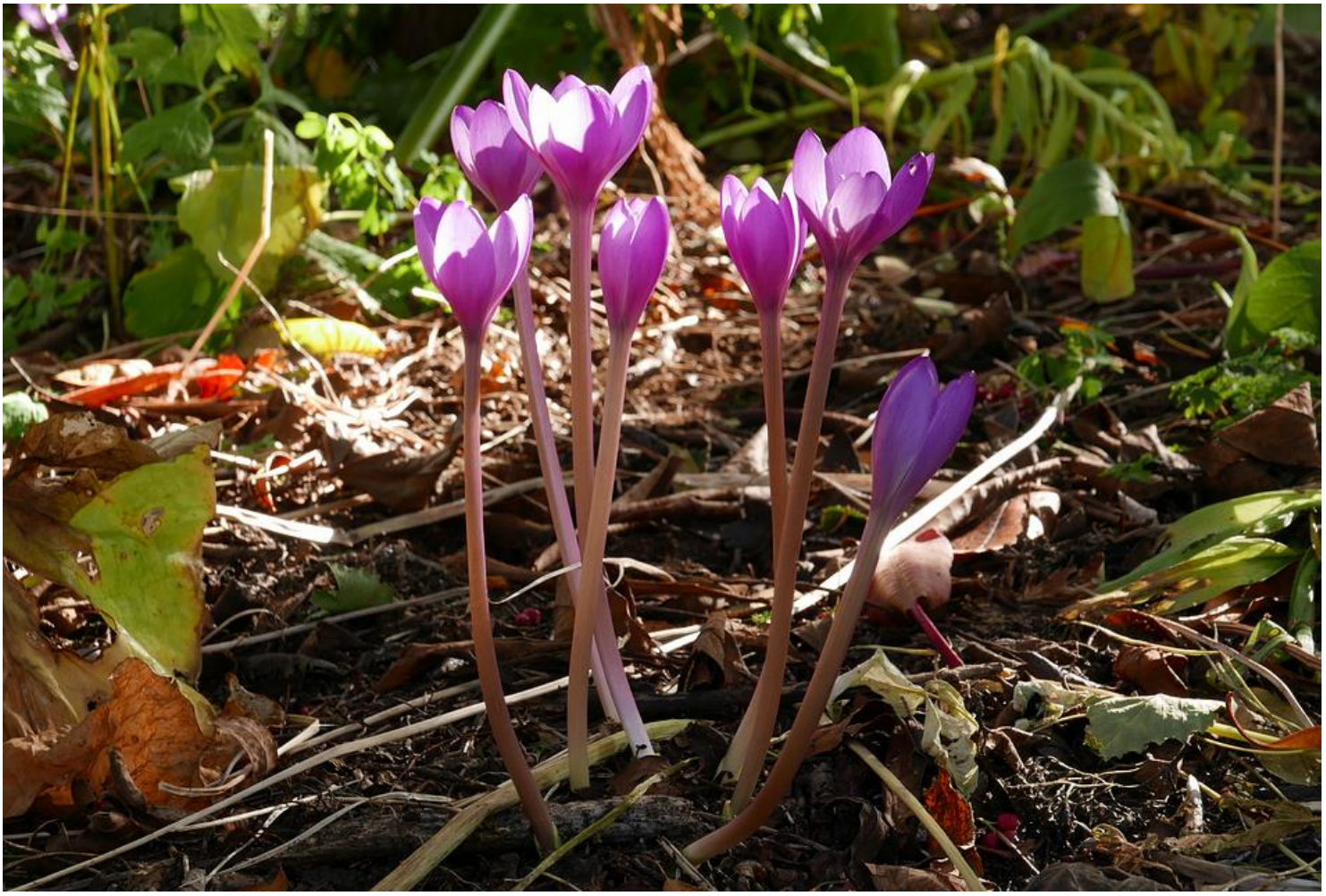
Colchicum x agrippinum,

Crocus kotschyanus

and Crocus speciosus.

Colchicum x agrippinum

Colchcium speciosum



Colchcium autumnale

Crocus speciosus

Crocus speciosus

One pale and two dark flowers of Crocus speciosus.

Crocus banaticus

One of the many groups of **Crocus banaticus** that have seeded around the garden with a bit of help form us in the way of scattering seed. This is one of the species that grows well in our cool moist conditions, it dislikes being too hot and dry in summer.

Sand bed 2016

I think that gardening is about understanding and manipulating habitats and to that end I created this sand bed (left) some years ago.
It was planted up with some small crocus corms plus seed and after a few years it was well populated by Crocus as you can see below.

Sand bed 2014

The Crocus grew and increased really well until the mice discovered that I had also created an area where it was all too easy to dig and eat the tasty crocus corms – and as a result nearly all the crocus in this bed are gone.

Having thought about this I found that there were two options either accept the situation and stop growing crocus here or to find a solution. Last week I wrote about my plan to cover the sand with small rocks to hinder the mice from digging. While walking the dogs I found someone was preparing a new bed in their garden and had dug up a heap of stones - these were just what I want so I spoke with the owner who was only too pleased for me to have the stones.

I now plan to re-populate this bed with Crocus by corms and seed in the hope that this bit of habitat manipulation will reduce the predation by mice to an acceptable level. I also think it looks better and might become a habitat to other some non-bulbous plants.

A lonely **Sternbergia sicula** flowers in one of the new sand beds I converted this year in the bulb houses. One of the greatest lessons we can learn about gardening is to be patient and enjoy the process as a new bed or planting grows naturally from small plants of seeds and not to go for the instant effect by cramming it full of mature plants. I also want our garden to have plants of all ages from seedlings up to mature specimens just as I would see in nature so I am happy to wait as the seed and small bulbs in these beds grow each year.

I have struggled to get **Sternbergia lutea** to flower in consecutive years and while it is early days I am encouraged that this is one of a handful that flowered in the sand bed last year and they are all flowering again this year. The feeding and watering regime are much the same as I used when they were in pots so I suspect that they are enjoying the extra freedom that their roots have to explore.

The first of the sand plunges I converted is full of leaf growth now indicating that the bulbs are growing and multiplying well– I am looking forward to an increasing floral display in the coming years.

A cyclamen grows in the corner of the same bed – the sticks are for Tropaeolum azureum and tricolorum to grow up - they are emerging now,

The oldest sand bed in the open garden is full is well established now - despite losing some crocus to mice it has not been quite so devastating as in the other so I have no immediate plants to cover this one. I will have to get down and do a bit of weed management.

Cyclamen hederifolium

Crocus, Lapeirousia laxa ,Pseudofumaria alba and lutea grow with some Paeonia cambessedesiiseed pods also visible in the narrow ‘hot bed’ below a south facing wall. This is the hottest driest bed in the garden where we try some of the bulbs that prefer those conditions but in our weather it retains moisture much of the year allowing the likes of the Pseudofumaria to seed in. We choose to leave them both to enjoy this display but also these plants will use up moisture keeping the ground as dry as possible.

Troughs are one of the ultimate habitats where we can manipulate on a small scale.

Armeria maritima and Geranium sessiliflorum

Trough with naturalistic planting most of which has seeded there without my intervention including the orchids, the grass and the fern.

Asplenium scolopendrium

You can see clearly the large number of spores on this fern which sowed itself into this trough and now it will shed its spores continuing this process of colonisation.

Asplenium scolopendrium

As we now have Asplenium scolopendrium appearing all over the garden we do not need to go around deciding where to plant it rather we decide where we want to leave it. Since it mostly grows in places where other plants would struggle, we mostly leave them.

Asplenium scolopendrium

Asplenium scolopendrium

Asplenium scolopendrium

There is also quite a variation in the leaves both in size and shape with some having very wavy edges, others split into multiple parts towards the tip.

Fuchsia procumbens has found a habitat where it can survive and grow in the raised wall where it can retreat underground for the winter to a relatively dry condition among the rocks.

Fuschia procumbens flower and seed pod forming – which will turn bright tomato red if it gets a chance to ripen before the weather turns too cold and dark.

Crocus banaticus

I leave you with this typical autumn scene Crocus banaticus shoots pushing up through the fallen leaves……..