



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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I chose the picture of the *Salix lanata* island to feature on the cover because in many ways it reveals the source and inspiration of our garden and what we are trying to achieve. I love the wild beauty of nature where opportunism and chaos abound.

Salix lanata can grow very large so having seen one growing in a pond in the late Jack Crosland's garden gave me the idea to plant one in a pot and semi-submerge it on a pile of bricks in the pond. This has restricted its growth but I never imagined that *Dactylorhiza* orchids would self-seed into the pot never mind thrive there. Other opportunists such as birch and

Vacciniums have also seeded in but this is where the gardener has to act as the referee and I remove them to prevent them from taking over the pot.



I consider the garden as another medium for me to express my art and just like my sculptures, drawings, prints or paintings it goes through many changes in the process. Asked when is an art work finished, the answer would have to be when it is

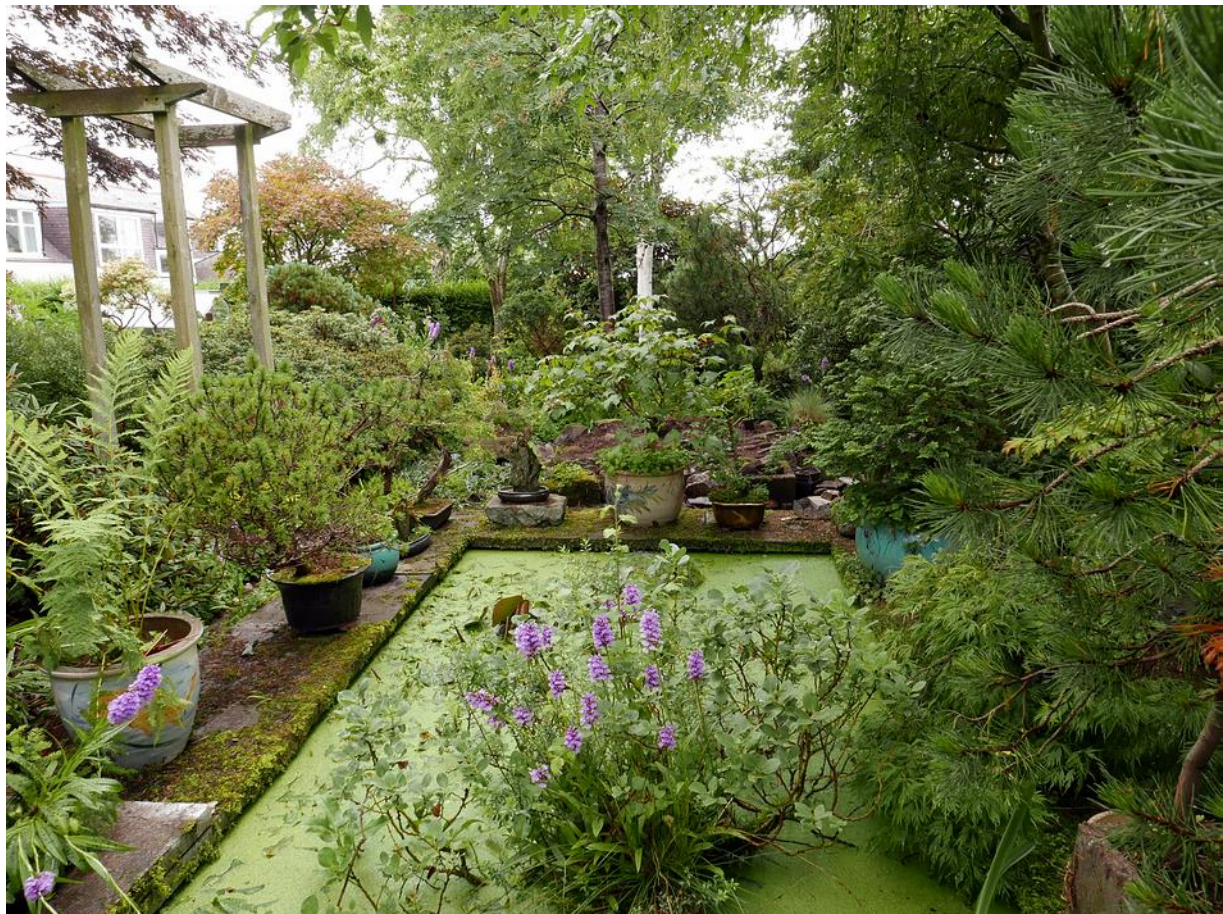
taken away from me because it is often the case that I will continue to work and make changes. This is especially the case when you revisit a work after some years because you bring to it the new knowledge and experience you have gained in the intervening years. If I were building this pond now it would be different as my objectives have changed as I matured however few weeks ago I decided to rework part of the layout creating a new habitat within the original layout of the pond.



Pentimento is a term used to describe an alteration in a work of art, evidenced by traces of previous work, showing that the artist has changed his or her mind as to the composition during the process of the piece. Here the traces of the original layout govern the shape of the new habitat while the planting style reflects the more natural style of the island that we have increasingly adopted in parts of the garden.

It is also an important part of the design of the garden that while each component can stand on its own it should also harmonise with and lead the eye onto other areas.

Looking across the pond from this angle you will see one of the other areas that I am reworking and showed a few weeks ago in [Bulb Log 2417](#).





The process I am following here also relates to all my other art works; that is I like the challenge of working with mixed media, using what materials are available or that I find.



I emptied and moved the polystyrene boxes of Erythroniums and gathered rocks of all types that I could find around the garden which included broken paving slabs. There are people who say to look natural you must build rock gardens using all the same types as rock and they must all line up to mimic uniform lines of strata. I break all these rules because while I agree that you do find regularity in nature you will also find

chaos where different types of rocks merge, where lines of strata have been violently bent, twisted and uplifted, where glacial events have dumped different materials together – it is that chaotic scene that I have in mind.



I wanted to include the troughs that were already there including the Ramonda trough on the right which is landscaped, crevice style, using broken paving slabs. On my first draft layout I tried some shards of slabs in parallel with those in the trough as in the previous picture but that did not please my eye so I decided to turn them around to run away from the trough; a line I continued using some volcanic and granite rocks I had – these lines will be reflected in the trough in the foreground.



To build the height I used the material dug out from the garden compost heap mixed with 6mm gravel and sharp sand in roughly equal volumes to make a well drained humus-rich substrate with good porosity.

I am currently working on repotting the bulbs from the bulb houses so I am scattering the old potting mix here as well.



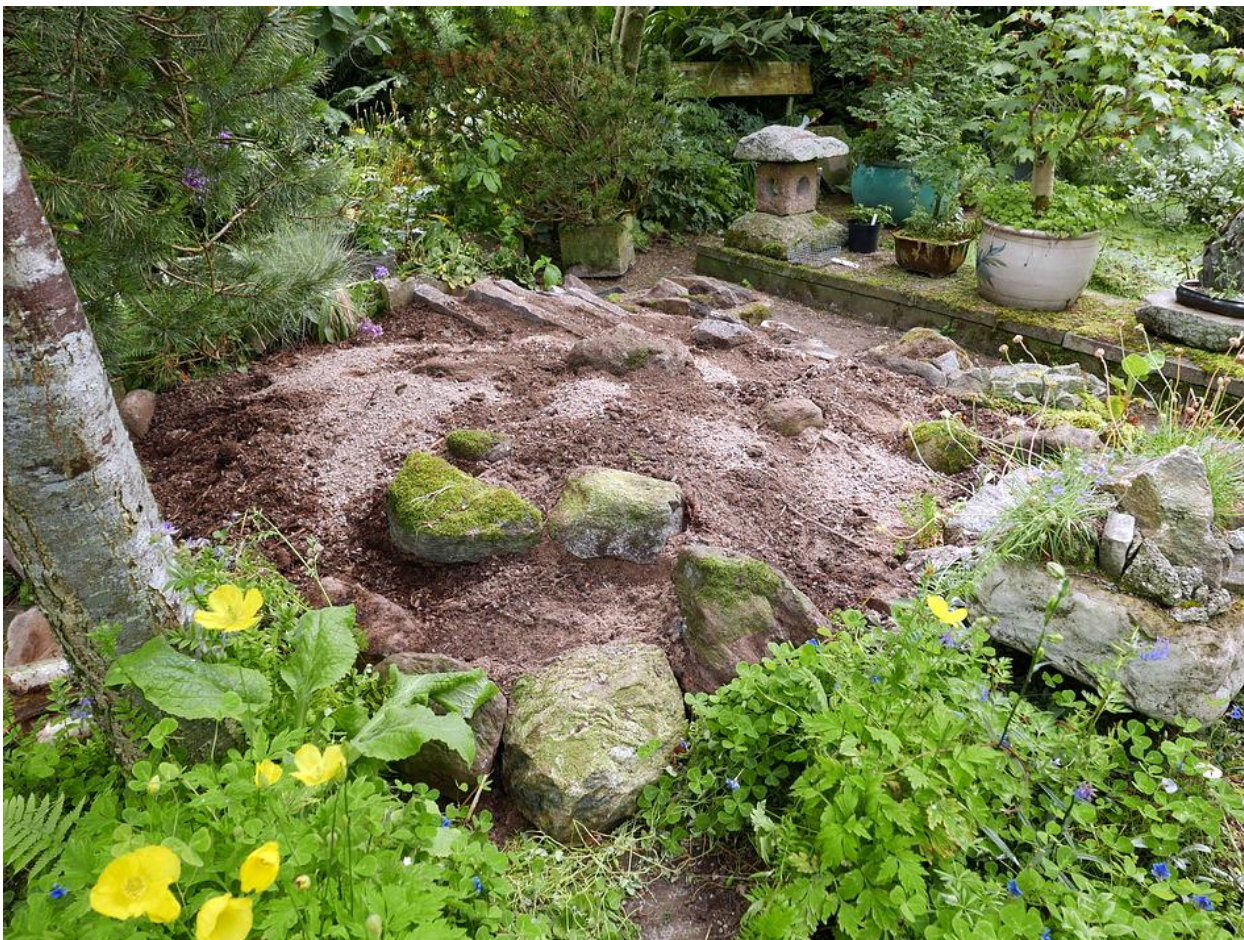
As you can walk all around this bed it is important to continually check that the layout works from all angles.

Unlike the other troughs, which sat on the ground have been incorporated to become some of the edges of the new bed, I intend to leave this trough raised up as it is.





Looking across the Ramonda trough.



The rocks on the side nearest the pond are laid out crevice style in parallel strata – the mound rises up to a grouping of rounded granite rocks typical of the glaciated and water worn rocks found in our area, this continues down the other side where some more of these rocks form the edge by the other path. I have seen so many mountains where one side is steep with sharp broken

rocks while the opposite side has been glaciated and is littered with rounded and worn rocks.



Now I am reasonably happy with the general layout I can start to plant - the plan is that the Ramonda planting will spill out from the trough and continue down the concrete slab crevice. I will do this by taking side shots from the bigger clumps of Ramonda in the trough which you can usually pull away with some roots.



A basket full of Trillium rivale grown from seed was overdue being split and planted out.



The basket of Trillium was sown so long ago that other plants such as this Hepatica had seeded in so they were also planted in the bed.



To try and make the planting as naturalistic as possible I varied by planting some Trilliums individually and other in groups. When I plant a group I dig a hole and space the Trillium rhizomes around the edge at roughly the same depth and orientation as I found them when I emptied the basket.



While most of the Trilliums had just one main shoot on the front of the rhizome a few like these had secondary shoots growing on older parts. It is very important not to damage the new roots which are those coming from the base of next year's bud - if you do the plant will not be able to grow properly – the old roots remain for a number of years but it is primarily the new roots that support next season's growth.



Cuttings I took a few years ago of **Rhododendron cephalanthum var. crebreflorum** and **Rhododendron dendrocharis** are well rooted, growing and ready to be planted out in the new bed – both cuttings were taken from the plants growing in the raised wall at the other side of the path so they will help link together these two separate beds.



Apology

Last week I showed Jeffersonia dubia flowers and seed pods but I made the silly slip of writing Jeffersonia diphylla – thank you to all those who kindly pointed out my mistake.

I know the difference well - both plants grow side by side in the raised wall – here are the leaves which shows the two part leaf form of Jeffersonia diphylla on the right with J. dubia on the left. The resulting seedlings from the seeds I sowed last

week are destined to go into the new bed.



Here I am looking across the raised wall towards the new bed and the pond beyond – at the moment the growth interrupts the view combining these areas but from certain angles and at different times of the year they will merge into a single vista.



Approaching from the other side the new bed is seen though the gate form.



To prove that you do not need a lot of space to create a garden in here are two tiny troughs placed so they can be viewed individually or combining to form one single view.



Campanula garganica



Seedlings from ***Aquilegia saximontana*** may well be hybrids but remain nice and dwarf in the slab beds.

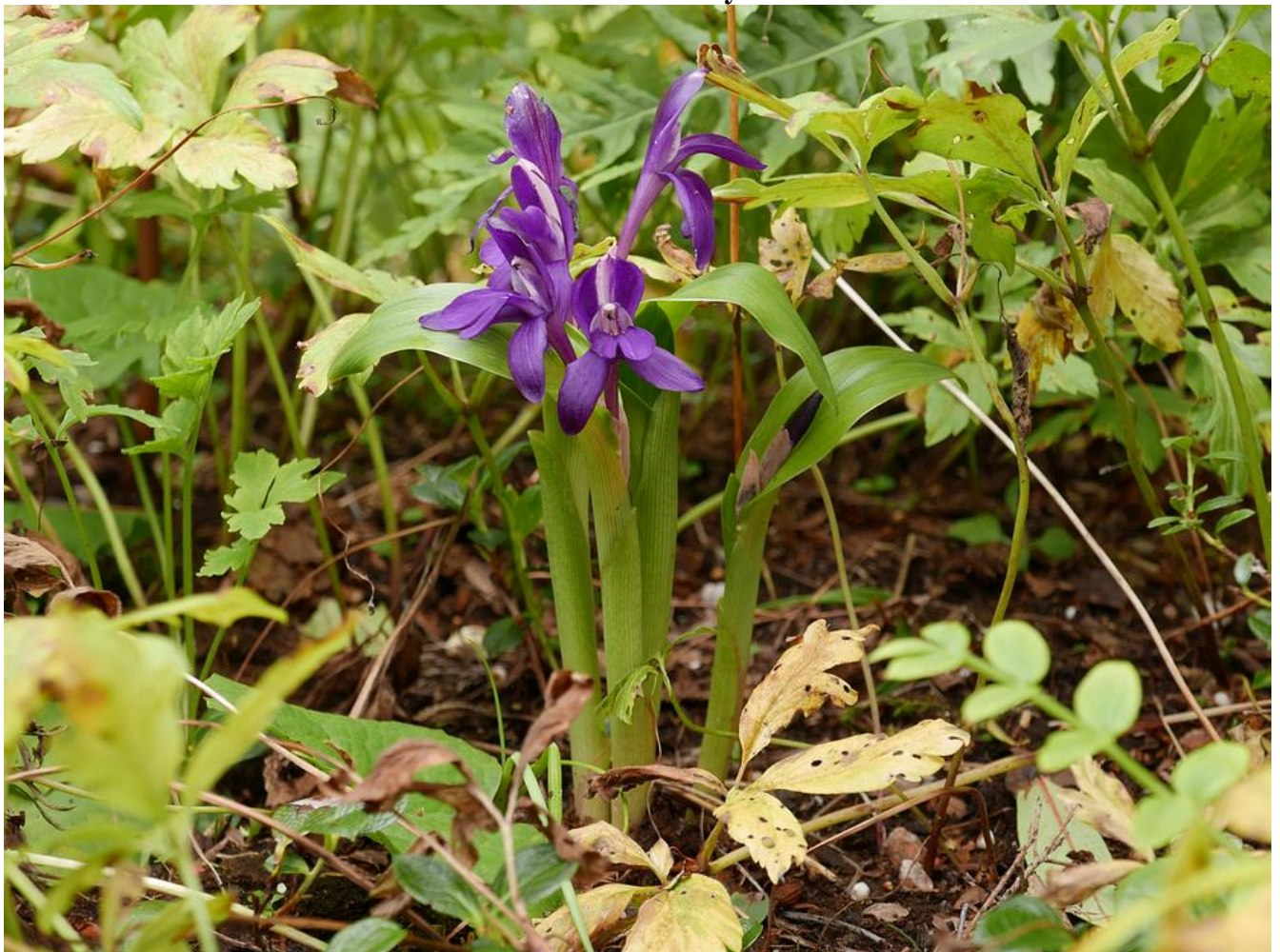


We have a number of Roscoe in flower many are of garden origin and involve cautleyoides and humeana.





***Roscoeae humeana* and *cautleyoides* cultivars.**



The Meconopsis flowers are past in the rock garden - now self-seeding Roscoea alpina and Roscoea scillicifolia are occupying the same space as Colchicum agrippinium - their growths perfectly timed to coincide with the colchicum leaves dying back and in turn their foliage will die back before the colchicum flowers appear in late summer/autumn.



Roscoea alpina



Roscoea scillifolia

Roscoea scillifolia is not the showiest of the genus but once established it seeds around freely producing its pink flowers every July.



Pink flowered *Lilium martagon* and yellow *Phygelius* hybrid.

The wildness of the front garden continues to bring us pleasure - now it is the turn of the taller plants to flower through the ground covering carpet of spring flowering plants and bulbs many of which have retreated underground until next year.



Lilium martagon with the beautiful new leaves of Rhododendron yakushimanum x tsariense.





Lilium martagon album

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