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Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 29.....19th July 2017





Arisaema candidissimum

For a number of years this group of *Arisaema candidissimum* has only produced leaves – maybe they have reached maturity now or perhaps the conditions to support flowering have been met and we have a number of beautiful flowers. As you will see, not perfect because a snail has had a chew out of one of the flowers. As a gardener I have come to accept this natural grazing; however this year we have way too many snails.

For many years I was a regular broadcaster on BBC Radio Scotland's gardening programme until it was axed - now they only

contact me occasionally when there is a topical news item and they want a gardener's perspective - that has happened twice in the last few weeks. The first time was about the threat posed by invasive alien species such as Giant Hog Weed, Himalayan Balsam, etc. and the second was when Chris Packham said words to the effect that gardeners should leave slugs and snails alone as they are part of the food chain. Interesting in that the larger snails that pose the biggest problem in many gardens are an alien invasive species – it is said that they were introduced by the Romans up to 2000 years ago. I have a lot of sympathy with Packham's viewpoint but we have to consider the larger position – firstly snails are not top of the list for hedgehogs or other native predators, they form a small percentage of their diet and secondly the recent mild winters and cool moist summers has seen a massive increase in the snail population so there is no natural balance in cultivated conditions. I have learned to accept and indeed welcome wild life into the garden and do not get too perturbed by all the holes eaten in the leaves but I also accept the need to control the current explosion of the snail population. I do not use poisons so we hunt the snails in the cool moist evenings.

Impatiens glandulifera, Himalayan Balsam, is a beautiful plant, which was why it was introduced to gardens around 1840 - however it has escaped, or was dumped, into the wild where it out-competes the native flora – it is also detrimental to wildlife especially the invasion of river banks. Our gardens would be impoverished without the introduction of plants from around the world but that introduction comes with a responsibility to contain and control the alien species.



The flowers of *Arisaema candidissimum* appear first through the still rolled leaves which gradually emerge and grow to rise above the flowers.



Arisaema jacquemontii

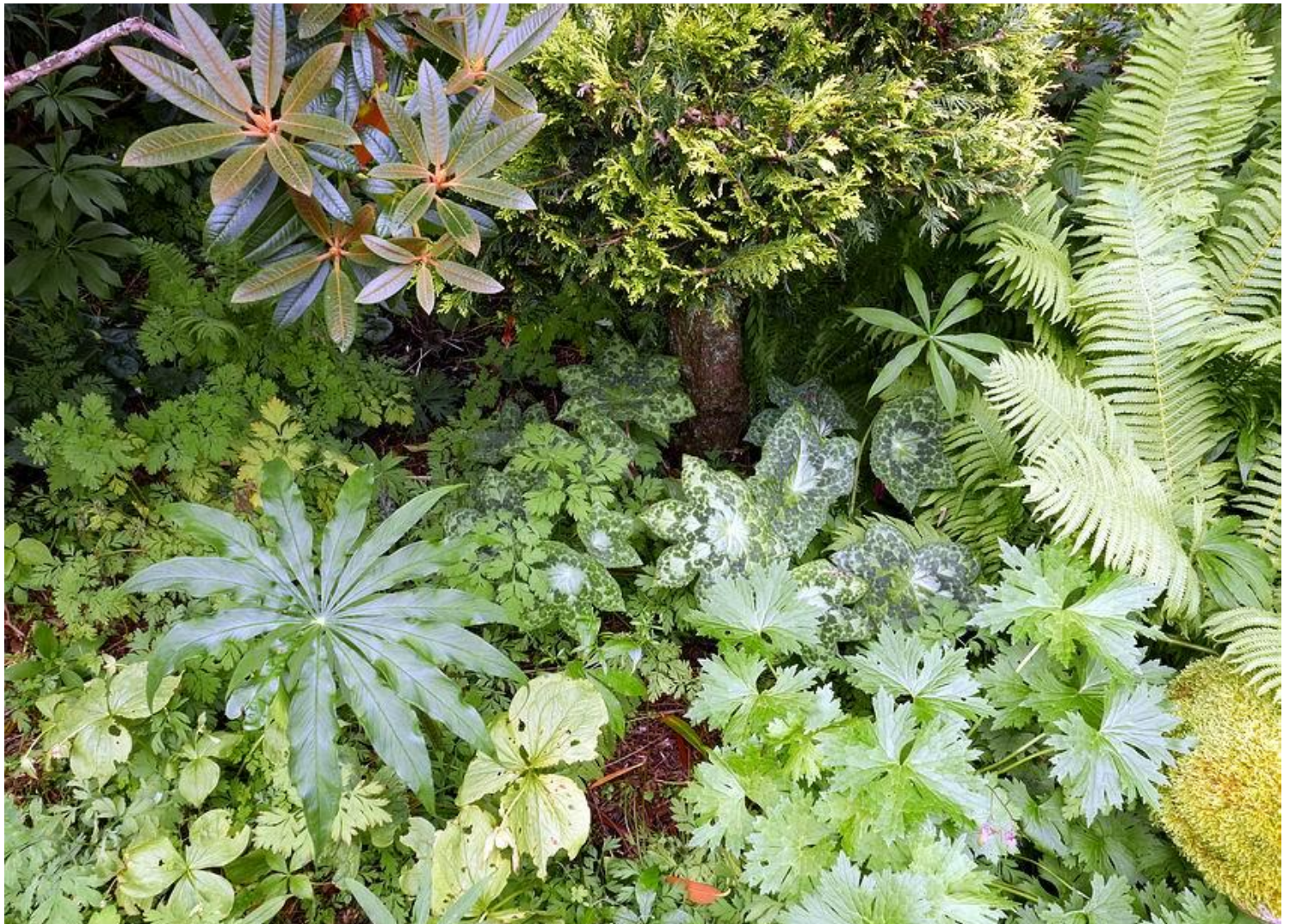




Arisaema wilsonii

The large leaves of *Arisaema wilsonii* remain a decorative element in the garden for many weeks - the flower stems, which were the first to emerge, are now hidden underneath as the seed develops.

I do not know why but we have never had a set of fertile seed on this plant but it does increase by division.



It is at this time of year when there are fewer plants flowering in our garden that I learn to appreciate foliage in all its forms, colours and textures. I like the ground to be covered with growth for as many weeks of the year as possible both for the visual effect and for the mutual benefit to the plants. The best mulch for retaining moisture in the soil is a growing green one because the leaf cover shades the ground and much of any moisture that does evaporate from the soil collects on the underside of the leaves. Here you can see leaves of plants introduced from many continents - *Arisaema*, *Dicentra*, the well-chewed leaves of *Trillium*, *Lilium*, *Aconitum*, fern, *Rhododendron*, conifer, and *Podophyllum* 'Spotty Dotty'.



Under the leaves we find the flowers of **Podophyllum 'Spotty Dotty'**.



A similar grouping in another area with another form of *Podophyllum delavayi*, *Veratrum fimbriatum*, more well-chewed *Trillium* leaves and others.



Fritillaria seed pods also feature in this tapestry of international foliage.



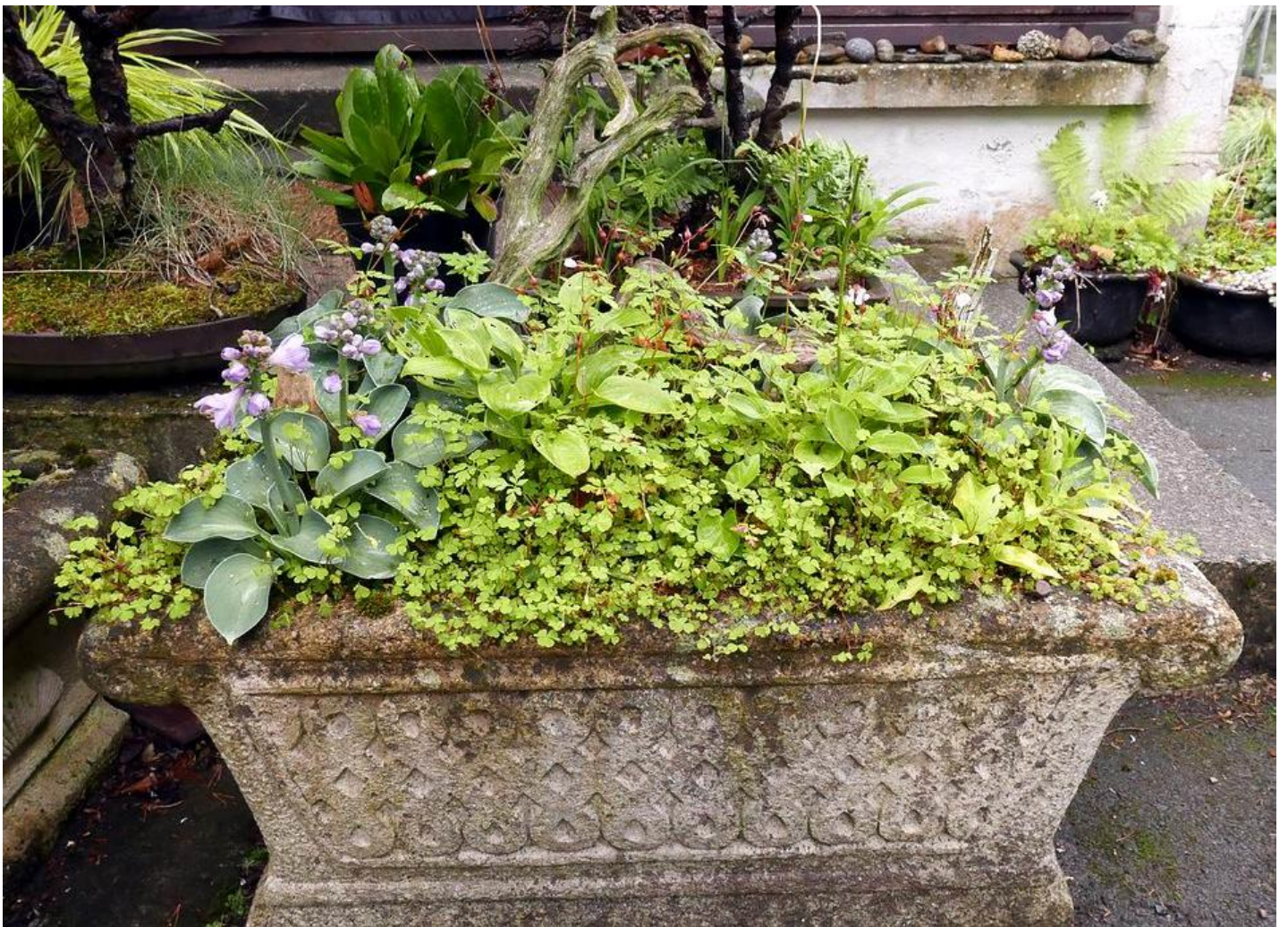
Introduced and 'invasive' species form a very large part of our garden - even in a single trough where we are growing plants from around the world, volunteer plants join in to share the space.



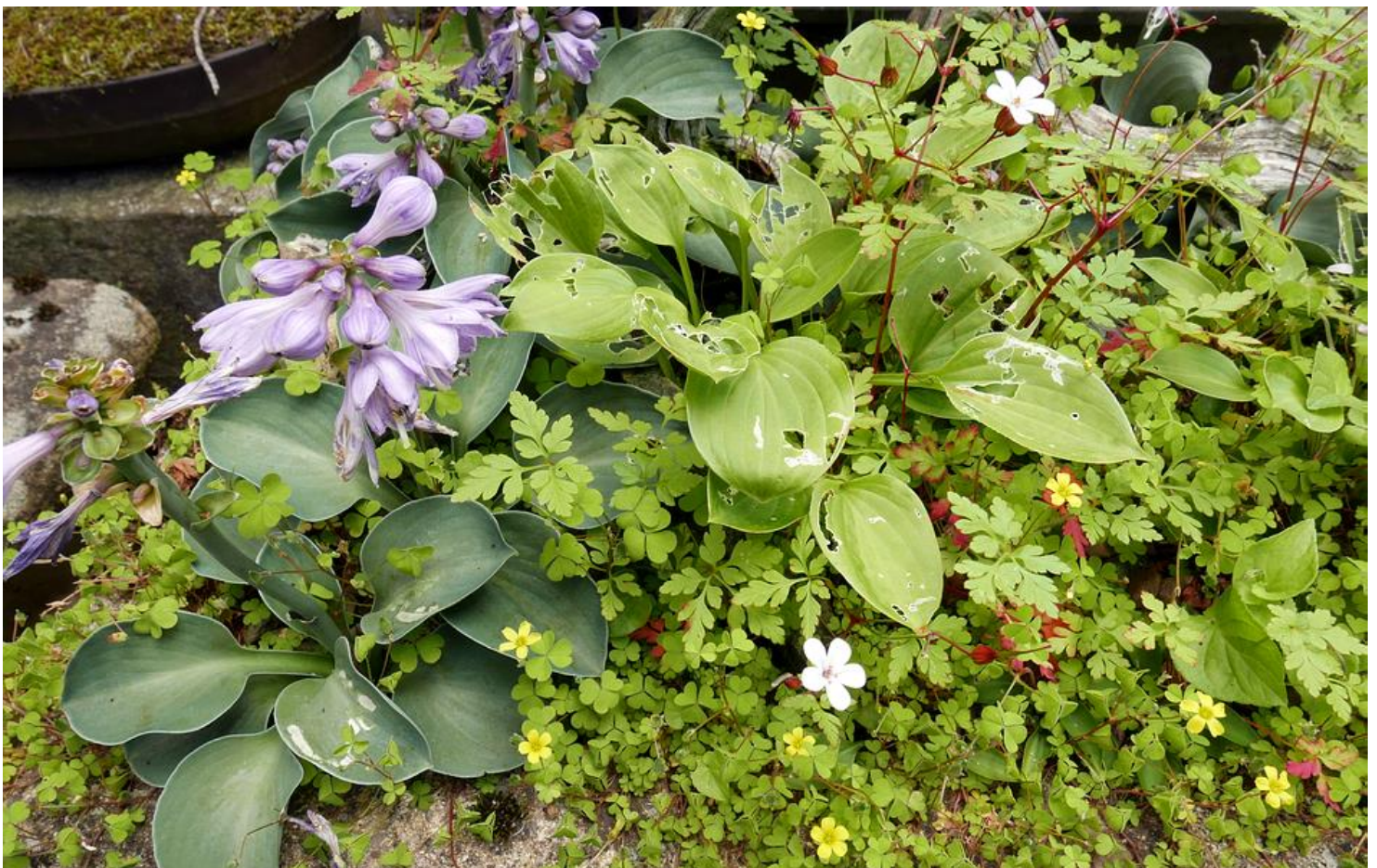
Rhodohypoxis baurei from South Africa has been joined by *Oxalis corniculata* and other plants from closer to home – they are cohabiting in a symbiotic way.



Rhodohypoxis baurei



I planted this trough up with some small forms of Hosta but it was not long before they were joined by invaders both native and alien.



Hosta with **Geranium robertianum** and **Oxalis corniculata** – you will also notice the evidence of the introduced snail.



I enjoy the natural look the volunteer invaders give to the garden but I am also convinced that they can provide a positive advantage to the growth of the plant community. At left is a corner of the sand seed bed and if you look towards the top right you will see some Erythronium leaves that are still green and feeding the young bulbs long after other similar seedlings without the community planting have died back. The foliage of the Oxalis, Geranium, and Viola

etc. has provided shade keeping the ground moist and cooler than bare ground and it is even possible that rather than competing for nutrients the roots of these plants are working together to more efficiently harvest nutrients from the sand.



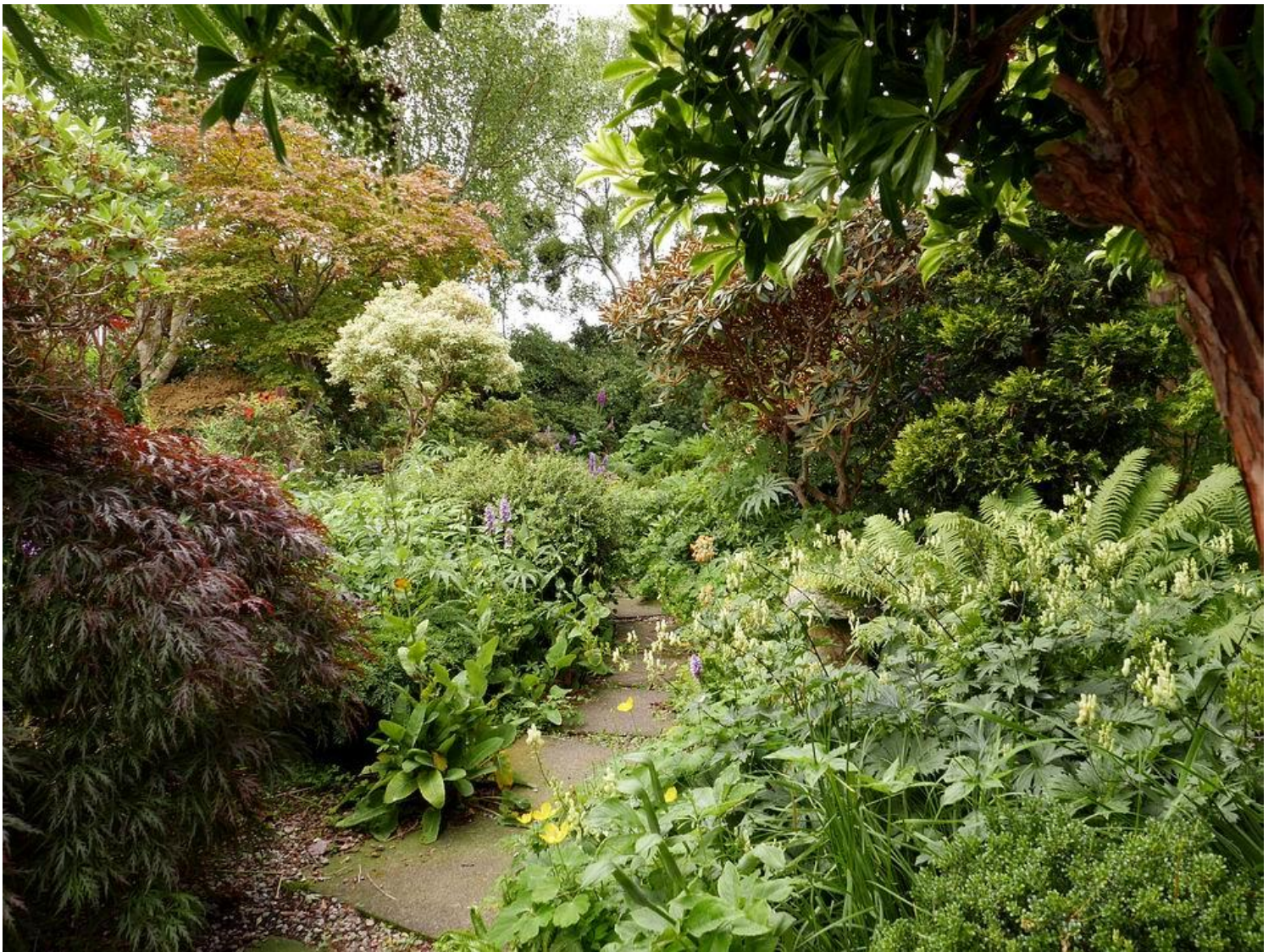
This theme continues at all levels through the garden: here in a narrow edge planting it is hard to even see the rock work at this time of year, the original planting is being joined by all sorts of volunteer plants including self-spring Asplenium scolopendrium. If you create the habitat the plants will come.



Further along the same narrow bed *Cymbalaria muralis* continues to produce flowers some months after the first blooms opened.



International patchwork of foliage – there are some tricky ones - what can you spot?



Foliage interest is not just at ground level but continues upwards to the shrubs and rhododendrons with the trees above.



Looking above the ground level the rhododendrons provide very decorative foliage especially at this time of year when the new growth is often coated in colourful indumentum.



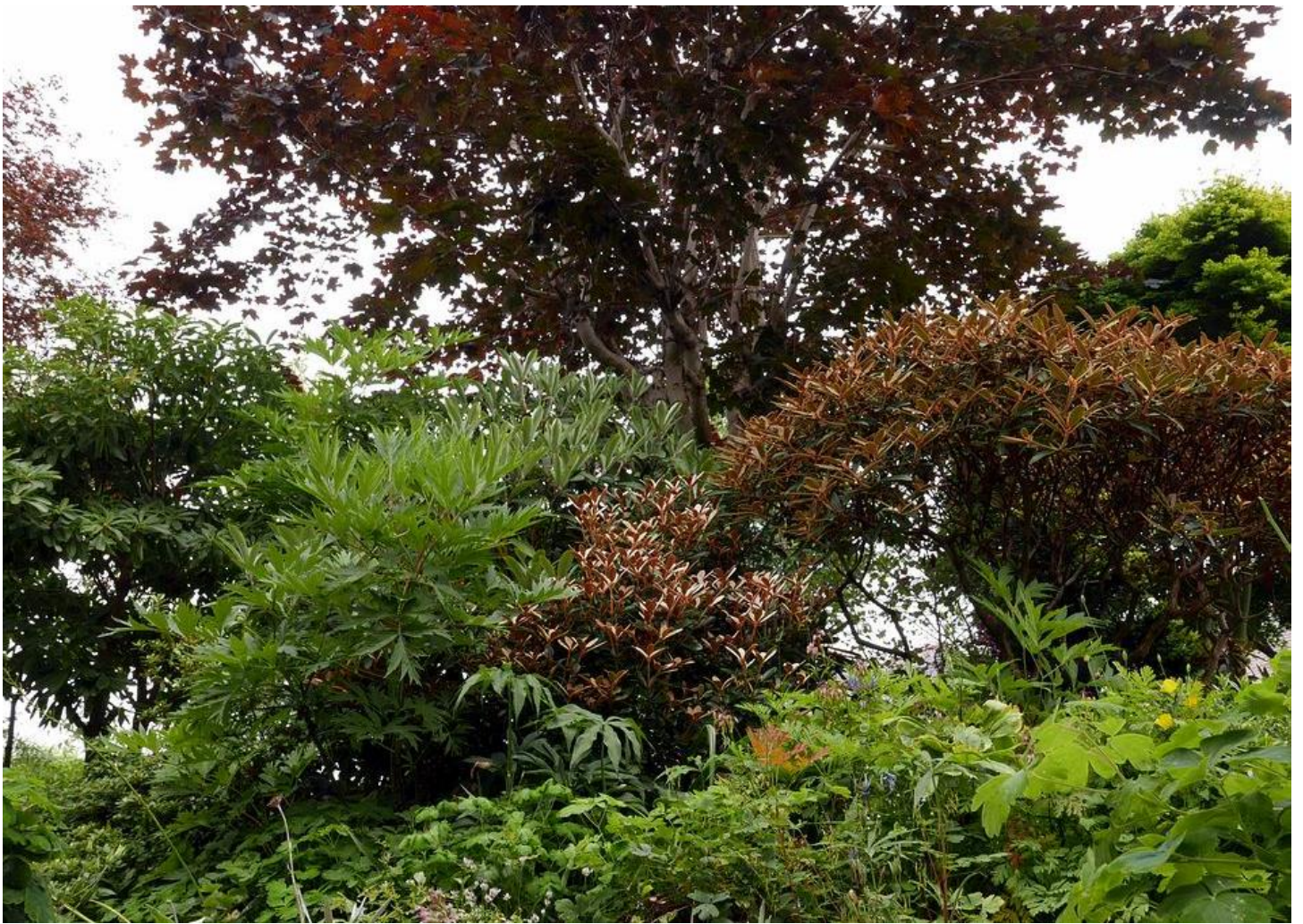
Rhododendron pachysanthum



Rhododendron yakushimanum x tsariense



Rhododendron uvariifolium



Above the rhododendron the colourful and decorative leaves of the trees also serve to cast cooling shade further limiting the evaporation of moisture from the ground.



Rhododendron roxianum* var. *oreonastes



Celmisia semicordata (New Zealand) with seed heads.





Ferns are planted throughout the garden greatly adding to the patchwork foliage effect.





Common self-seeders are *Campanula persicifolia*





A species native to Scotland is the beautiful daisy **Leucanthemum vulgare**, considered a weed by many, while the exotic climbing daisy from South America, the Mutisia hybrid below, is much sought after. I think both are of equal merit deserving a place in our gardens.



Mutisia hybrid



***Cyananthus lobatus* (Himalaya)**



***Hypericum reptans* (Himalaya)**



Tropaeolum speciosum (Chile)

It seems there are two kinds of gardeners, those who want Tropaeolum speciosum but cannot get it to grow and those who have it and cannot get rid of it. It certainly grows very well in our garden where it spreads by plants rising from the exploring roots and by seeds spread by the birds. We do have to remove it when it grows through some of the smaller shrubs because it can do great damage or even kill a small leaved rhododendron if it is allowed to cover it completely.



It is my view that we should consider all plants to be of equal merit regardless of their origin or rarity. Our aim is to have as diverse a flora as we can, producing flowers for as many weeks as possible - this also benefits the wild-life providing a food source.

In addition the range of habitats within our relatively small garden of 900 m² proves to be an attractive haven for a wide range of birds in an urban environment.



Arisaema candidissimum

Our gardens benefit from the introduction of plants from around the world but we have a responsibility to control them in some cases and to preserve and maintain them in others. We manage my pet dandelion so it has never set seed while we carefully gather the seed of other plants to maximise the rate of increase – gardening is about managing and balance.....