



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 40.....4th October 2017





Rhododendron leaves



Nothing is more characteristic of autumn than the leaves as they turn yellow, red and bright orange often with splashes of green still visible when you view them against the light as captured in the cover image of Hamamelis leaves. Photographed into the sun, exposed to retain the deep blue skies and using a small aperture which achieves the star effect of the sun.

Shafts of light from the low sun passing through the trees and shrubs greatly adds to the drama of the season by picking out and highlighting colours

creating striking effects of light and shade.

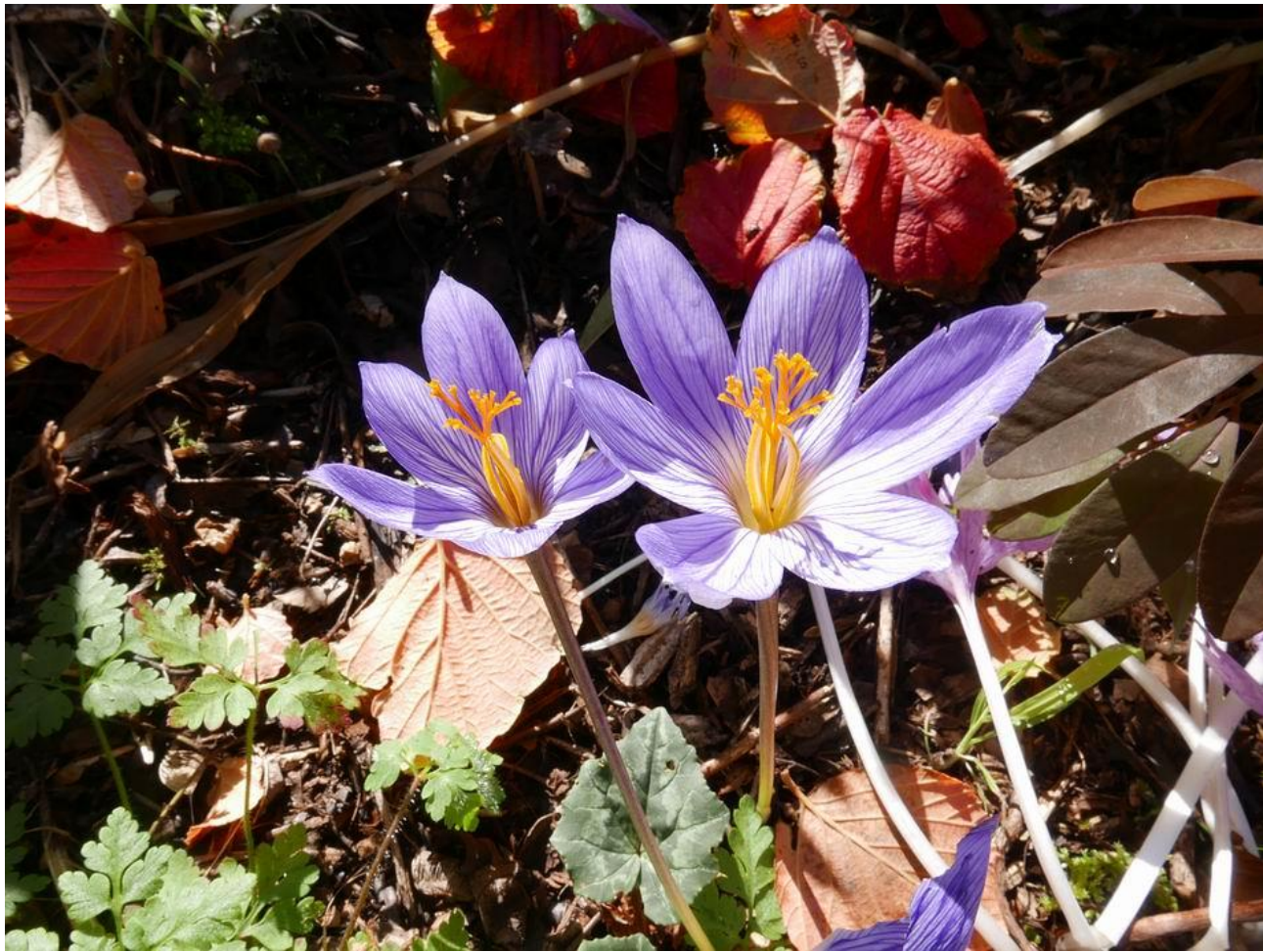


Rhododendron leaves(above) also take on autumn colours as they come towards the end of their life then fall off – it is just that instead of lasting for a single growing season each Rhododendron leaf can last one or two years before it is shed so the shrub is never without leaves. There are some Rhododendrons that are deciduous, losing all their leaves every year, most of these are what we used to know as Azalea before they were sunk into Rhododendron.

Crocus have a habit of getting everywhere in our garden as you may notice in this picture where a lone Crocus nudiflorus has made its way into the bonsai pot.

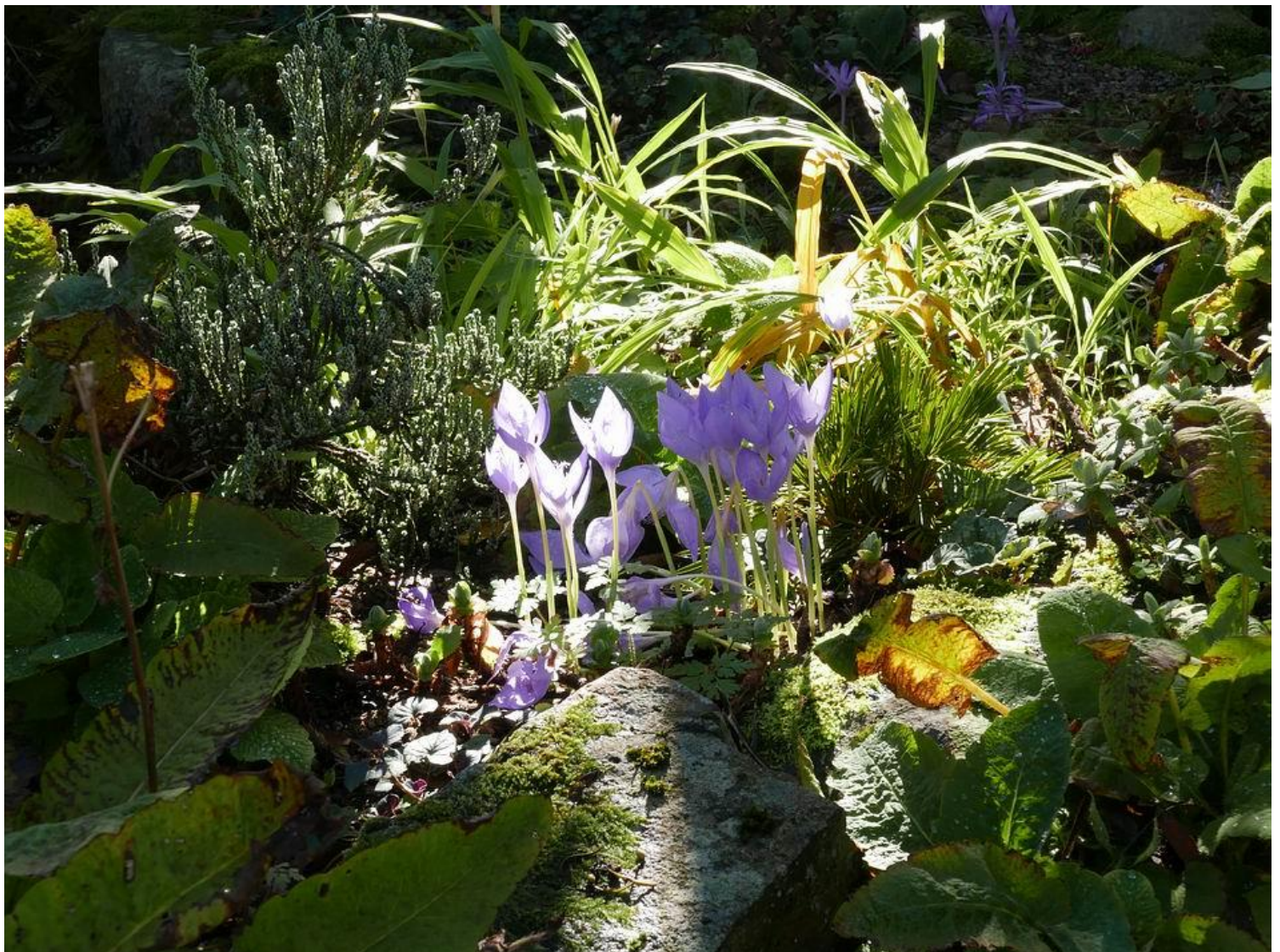


The spotlight effect of a shaft of sunlight picks out **Colchicum agrippinum** and **Crocus speciosus** flowers growing through the fine foliage of **Geranium robertianum** with further colourful highlights provided by the leaves fallen from the Hamamelis, seen above and on the cover.



Fully open flowers of *Crocus speciosus* taking advantage of their moment in the sunshine - they will quickly close up when the sun passes, moving them back into shade.

Crocus speciosus



Only half of this group of *Crocus banaticus* are in the limelight.



Allium wallichii



Allium wallichii

Allium wallichii is less showy than the Crocus but its flowers are far more robust and last for some weeks making this a valuable autumn flowering bulb in the garden.



The large red fruits on **Podophyllum hexandrum** remind us that autumn is also the time of fruits and seed in the garden.



Vaccinium smallii

The dark black, distinctively shaped berries of *Vaccinium smallii* are edible with a sharp refreshing taste, the leaves of this species are deciduous hence they are turning this deep dark burgundy colour in advance of falling off.

Vaccinium smallii





Vaccinium nummularia

Vaccinium nummularia has small clusters of very shiny black berries which also provide a tasty refreshing treat as I am working in the garden.



Rosa sericea fruits.



Hypericum androsaemum

The Hypericum berries are eaten by birds which in turn distribute and deposit the seeds making this a common plant which appears spontaneously in many a garden – it is a good volunteer to have.



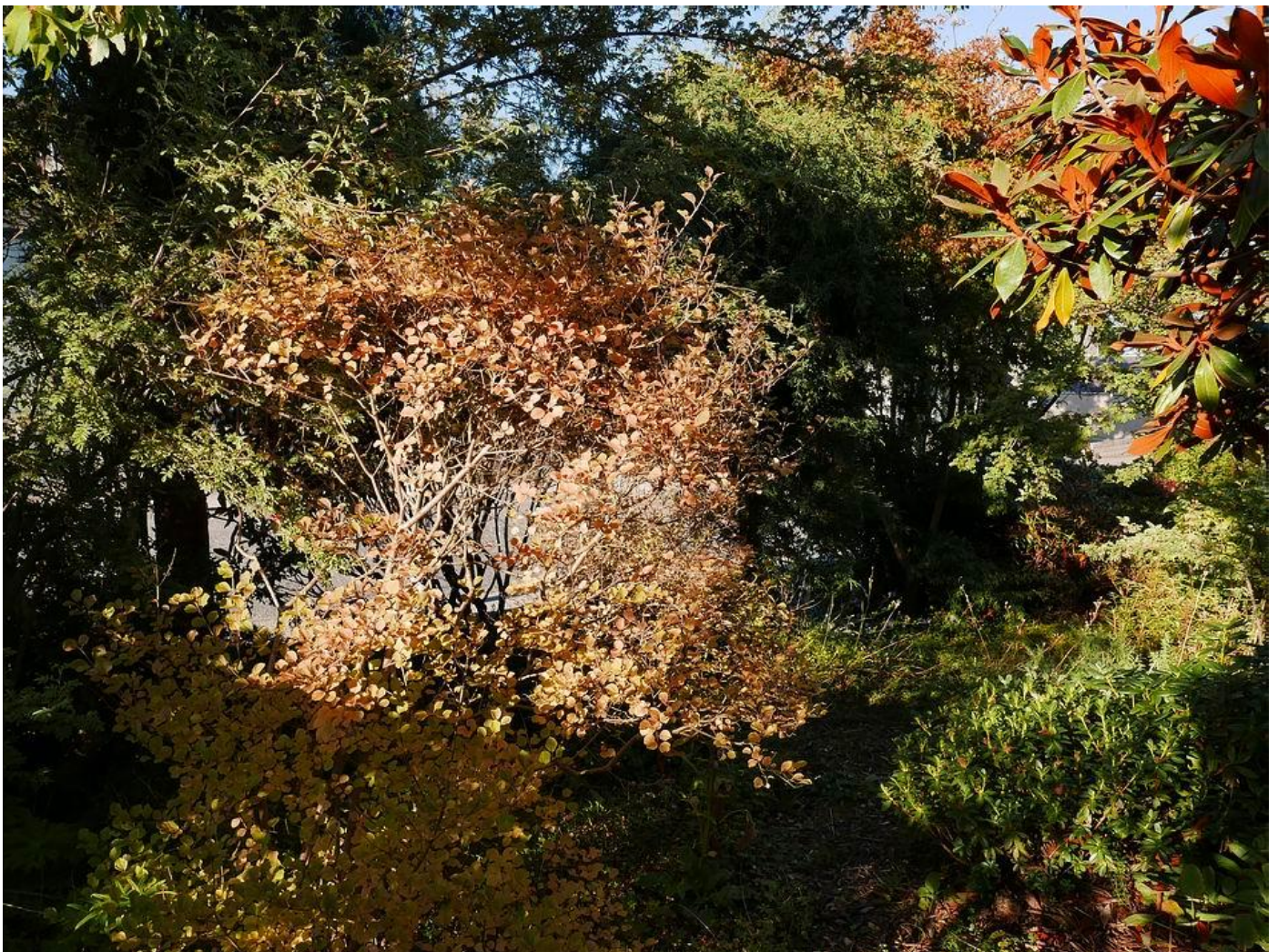
The ripe fruits of ***Arisaema ciliatum* var. *liubaense*** lie cradled in the leaves of *Asplenium scolopendrium* as the seeds spill out.



Front garden



Evergreen colour of a conifer and *Rhododendron bureavii* stand out against the clear blue autumn sky.



The effect of light and shade picks out the leaves on *Syringa palibiniana* as they also turn yellow before falling.



If the growing conditions have been favourable many Rhododendrons having flowered in the spring will go on and produce some more flowers in the late summer and autumn– this is particularly the case in the smaller Rhododendrons but some of the larger species also give the gardener this autumn bonus.



Rhododendron taliense x lacteum



Rhododendron elegantulum



Rhododendron primuliflorum



Rhododendron russatum



Rhododendron 'Yellow Hammer'



Codonopsis ovata

Autumn is a time when I will go through the seed frames to see what is ready to be planted out into the garden. This pot of *Codonopsis ovata* was sown as seed in February 2016 now at the end of their second season of growth they are big enough to be planted directly into the garden so I planted them into the new bed I formed near the pond.



Codonopsis ovata

You could mistakenly think that the growth had rotted or been grazed off leaving just the roots but on closer observation you will see the tiny purple shoots that will form next year's growth sitting on the top.



Crocus serotinus

The bulb houses received their second storm of the year as I repeated the process of completely soaking all the pots and sand beds – from now I will water pots individually according to the amount of leaf growth showing.

Many Crocus such as *Crocus serotinus* produce their flowers before the leaves grow so remember after the second storm to wait until the leaves appear before any additional watering.



Because the bulbs are not in pots watering in the sand beds has to be slightly different but I work to the same basic principal so all sandbeds received the second soaking and from now I will judge when to water by the growth of leaves. Initially I will direct additional watering around the clumps of leaves but I have found that there is less of a risk of bulbs being too wet when they are growing in the bigger volume of the sandbed than they are in a small plastic pot.



Sternbergia lutea



Sternbergia lutea growing and flowering well in a sandbed – this bulb is obviously increasing and has (at least) two flowers but the one on the top left of the picture is producing more leaves but no signs of flowers.

I believe one of the requirements for *Sternbergia* to produce flowers is that they receive sufficient water and nutrients during this early period of growth. I will scatter a small extra amount of Growmore NPK 7-7-7 around the leaves and give them additional regular watering to support the leaf growth then as the flowers fade I will add a potassium supplement to encourage bulb and next year's flower development. On discussing *Sternbergia* with Matt Topsfield, who is getting a good flowering on his plants in the Outer Hebrides, I discovered that he was using local shell sand in his potting mix which he thinks adds to his success. The shell sand would make an alkaline mix making it easier for the plants to take up the nutrients than they would in our acid potting mix and sand.



Crocus mathewii



Unfortunately the flower of *Crocus mathewii* emerged on dark cloudy days causing the flower tube to etiolate and flop over as it searched for more light, to get a view into the flower I propped it up on a plant label.



**Crocus
mathewii**

The very beautiful dark throat makes this a most desirable species in a genus that is full of beauties. Many of the autumn flowering crocus will produce a second flower so hopefully the weather will be better when it appears.



Geranium robertianum is allowed to seed around in our garden and especially when it adds interest as shown between the edge of the slabs and the troughs beside the bulb house - it is very easy to remove if required.



Geranium robertianum flowers are typically pink but a few years ago we found a single white flowered seedling which to our delight comes true from seed. We have encouraged this attractive variation especially in the cobble covered sand bed where with its small stature it makes the perfect companion plant to the bubs.



Geranium robertianum white seedlings growing in the cobble bed with a white **Crocus speciosus** hybrid.

Lapeirousia laxa

Lapeirousia laxa has grown itself in our garden for over thirty years. Originally we grew it in a pot under glass until we ran out of space and planted it outside. Sadly it succumbed to the frosts however it had set seed and to our delight after a few years we found it flowering again and so it has maintained its presence in our garden through successive generations of self-sown seed.

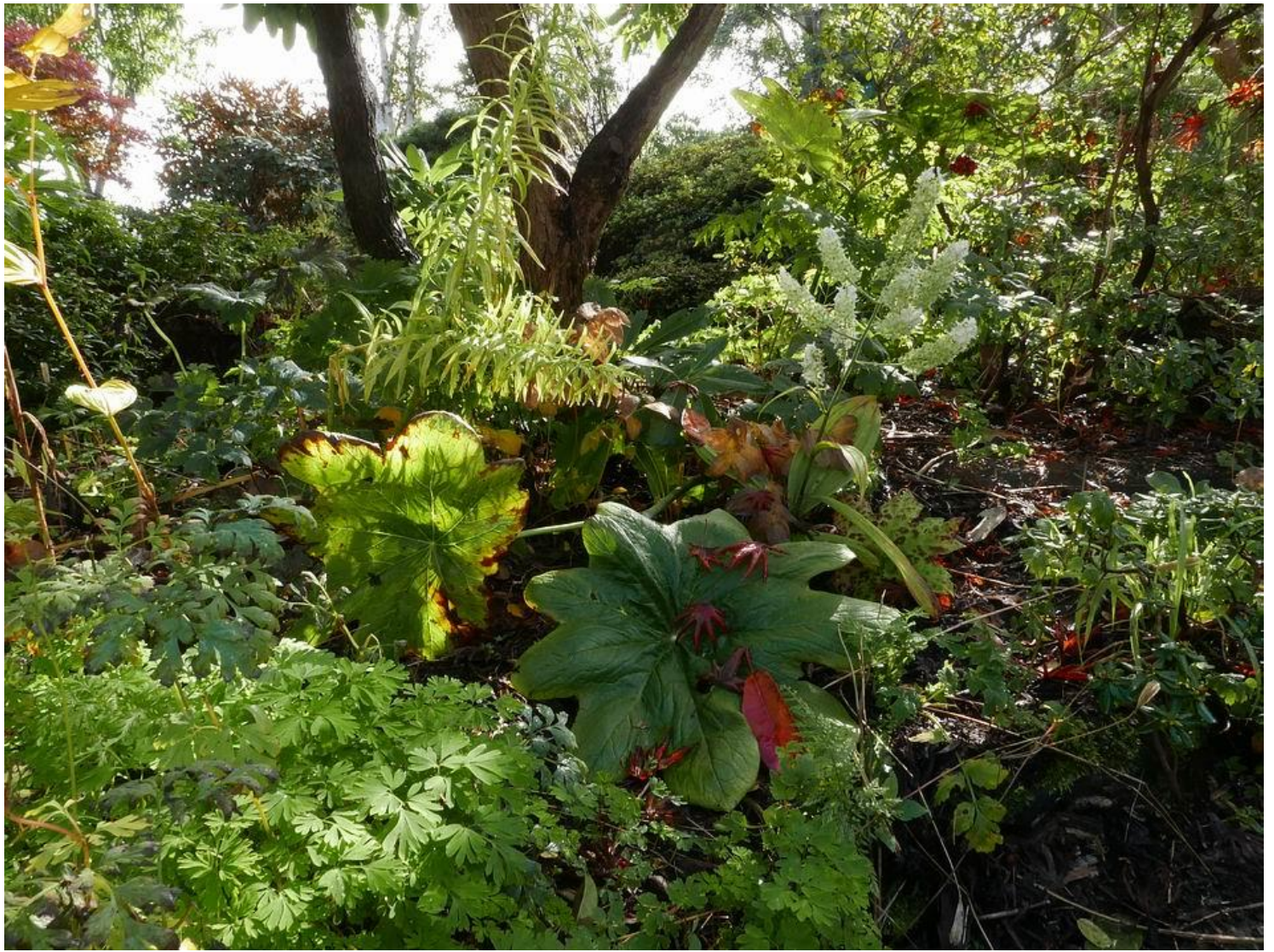


I cannot resist sharing more photographs of the many fungi that are in the garden.

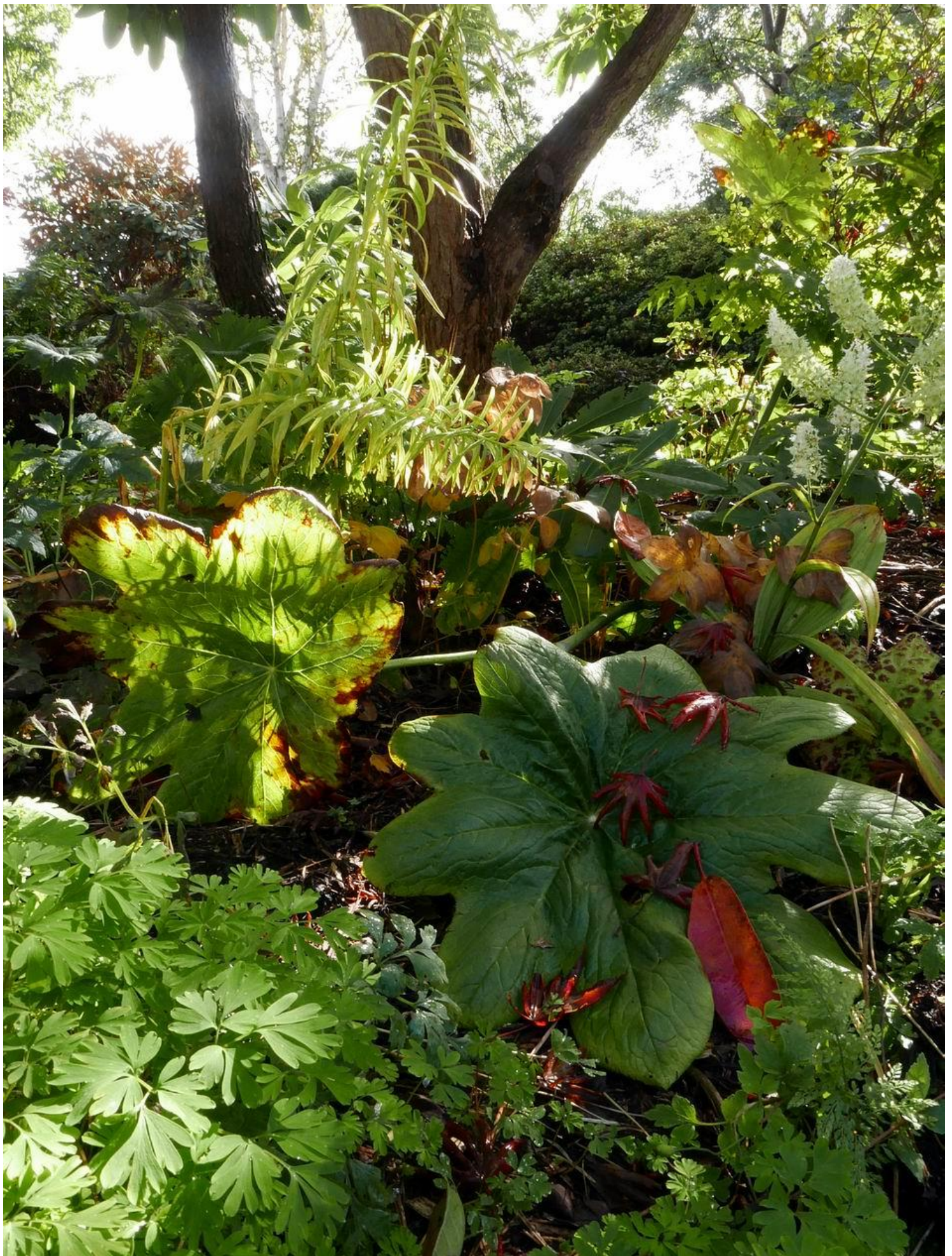


Autumn colours also come to this trough where the leaves of the small Hosta cultivars turn yellow before the plants retreat underground for the winter – the white form of *Geranium robertianum* and *Oxalis corniculata* that have joined the hosta in the trough will also retreat for the winter.





All the signs of autumn are here with the late flowering **Veratrum fimbriatum** standing erect among the large flopping leaves of **Podophyllum pleianthum** which act as a screen onto which the outline of lily stems are projected by the backlight from the sun.



With all the colours of the foliage dies back before winter in the bottom left corner you will see the new leaves have appeared on *Corydalis* 'Craigton Blue' these have proved hardy surviving through our winters giving the gardeners a whole new season to look forward to next spring - it is hard not to love autumn. Then there are all the bulbs that will continue to flower under the protection of cold glass throughout the winter