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Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 15.....11th April 2018

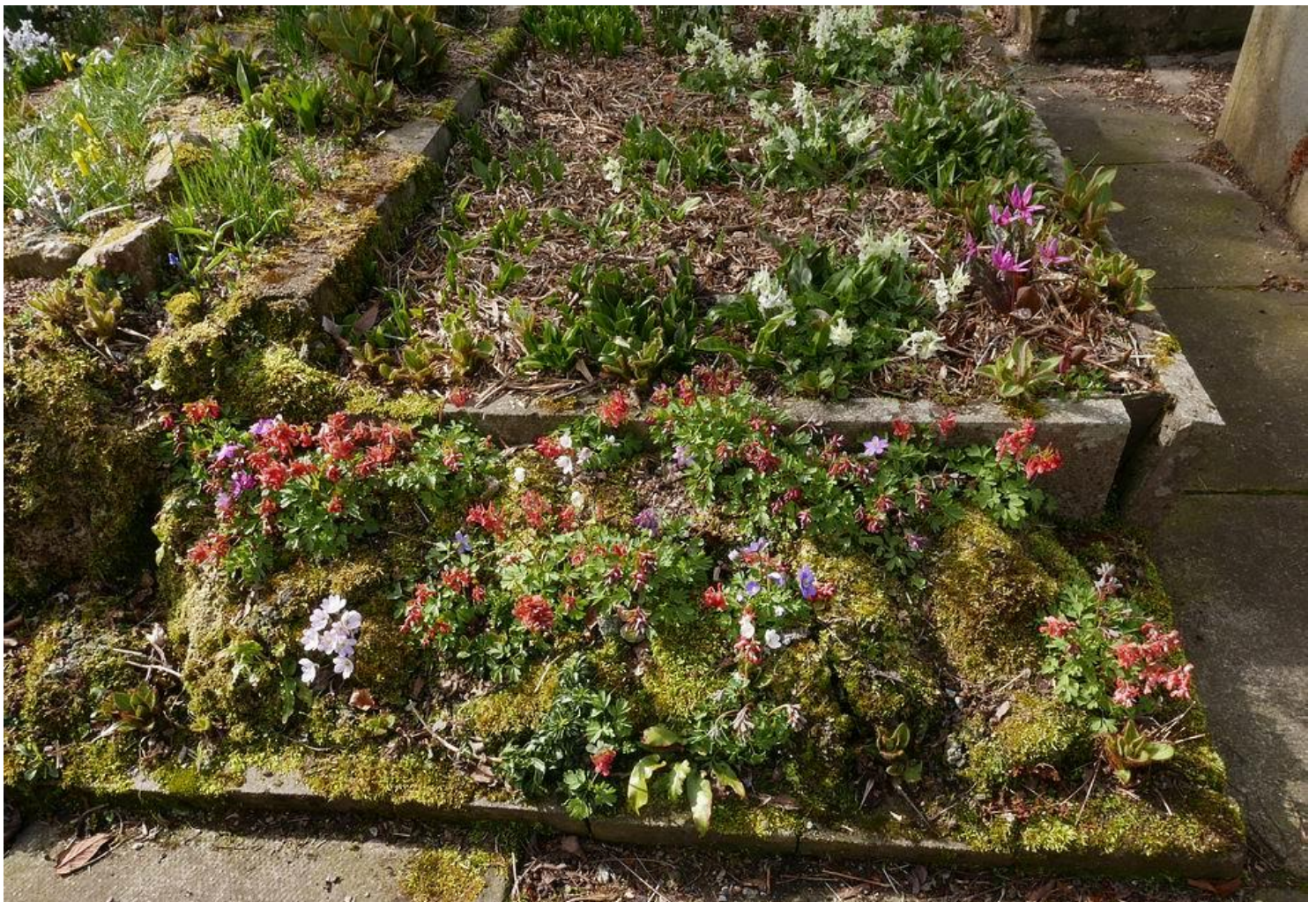




Last week I left you looking for the pink form of *Erythronium caucasicum* growing among the plants in the last picture so this week I have featured it on the cover picture. The flower is just emerging and has yet to open fully but it is already a bit chewed - this imperfection is something I have learned to accept in the garden partly because it happens just the same in the wild.

As time passes I get more "native" in the garden; that is I try and mimic how plants grow in the wild. The cover image shows these plants are not growing through neat

cultivated ground instead they rise from mossy covered ground just as they may be found in nature. The inclusion of *Narcissus cyclamineus* gives the game away that this is a garden, as it would not be found growing alongside *Erythronium caucasicum* and *Cyclamen coum* in the wild, however it is a natural look I try to achieve not geographical accuracy among the plants.



I also showed this narrow bed last week but it continues to be transformed as the plants grow and even though it is a small area that could be fitted in anywhere, I can spend hours observing and enjoying it at this time of year.



I started by building a sloping landscape of broken concrete block against the side of an Erythronium plunge frame and planting out a selection of three year old *Hepatica* seedlings and a few *Corydalis solida* now they are seeding themselves among the moss covered broken concrete adding to the natural appearance.





Corydalis solida* and *Hepatica nobilis



Ferns, Meconopsis and Campanula have also volunteered to grow here as they have seeded in from adjacent plants.



The plants in the troughs are also waking up as they start the transformation from winter when only the mosses and liverworts are actively growing to a colourful spring as the flowering plants come into growth. To help ensure a strong growth of the flowering plants and prevent them from being swamped by the mosses I have scattered a light

dressing of a pelletised 7-7-7 N-P-K fertiliser across the troughs.



Primula marginata 'Napoleon' grows across the trough and down the sides.

When it becomes too straggly I will cut the growths right back after flowering then a new set of new will grow from the stems - I will also root the cuttings in a box of sand to make new plants.

During the winter **Saxifaga** 'Theoden' looks all brown, showing little signs of life except for the tiny green leaves at the tips of each stem then spring works its magic producing a mass of flowers which compared with the plant are large in scale.



More saxifrages are flowering across a number of troughs as they emerge from their winter state.



Over the years I have introduced many saxifrage species and cultivars some of which do not like our weather and die in the first year others survived for a number of years through winters covered in snow and ice but suffered heavily and rotted away when we have a mild wet winter. I welcome those that have survived our conditions long term and it is these that I propagate by cuttings taken in late August.



More saxifrages cover these rock outcrops on one of the slab beds note how they are covered in buds – I will show them again when the flowers open.



Sometimes I have to intervene to assist the plants in the battle between and the mosses - I have added fertiliser around this saxifrage to encourage growth but will also pluck away some of the moss that is running through it.



More
troughs, more
moss and
more
saxifrages.





Moving from the garden where I try and mimic nature to the very artificial environment of the bulb house where these bulbs are growing in plastic pots.



Narcissus cantabricus clusii



Narcissus eugeniae seedling



Narcissus bulbocodium



Muscari azureum – but I always call this as I got it - *Hyacinthella libanotica*!

Acis tingitana



Corydalis nudicaulis



**Narcissus
confusus**

One of the advantages of growing bulbs in pots is they can be easily labelled as a reference but I am taking more pleasure from the sand beds where I plant the bulbs out randomly as shown below.



Sand beds



The following pictures are of plants flowering in the sand beds.

**Narcissus
x susannae**



Narcissus jacetanus is very similar to *Narcissus asturiensis* only differing in the narrowing of the corona as can be seen in the side on view.



Narcissus asturiensis



Narcissus asturiensis



Fritillaria armena



Fritillaria sewerzowii



Hermodactylus tuberosus



Sand beds



I grow a number of bonsai, all of which I created from young trees and many are now 30 plus years old – for the last few years I have had the intention to repot and root prune them and now I have done it. Below is the picture sequence that illustrates the process of cutting the root ball back by around a third to allow for new compost and a fresh growth of roots.



Tree removed from the pot.



Several years of excessive root growth circle the pot pushing the tree out of the pot.



I use a small pick and knives to loosen the tangle of roots.



Gradually I am able to cut away the outside roots leaving the main root ball intact.



Tree with surplus roots cut away.



A mixture of approximately equal parts sand, grit and loam plus a good handful of bone meal is placed in the bottom of the pot.

I make a pile in the centre which will allow me to settle the tree at the correct height and position as well as ensuring there are no air gaps underneath.



Tree set ready to fill in the rest of the potting mixture which is followed by a good watering in.



A second tree is also done just awaiting the final fill of potting mix and a bit of a trim back of the top growth. Although cutting back this amount of roots looks brutal, it is the tips of the roots that absorb most of the moisture and nutrients. Ideally root pruning should be done every year in young trees and around three years in older trees. Cutting the roots back in April as the tree is coming back into growth will see a whole new growth of young root tips emerging from the part of the root ball I left intact and I will know this is happening when I see the top growth also starting to grow in a round a month or six weeks' time.



Planting the bulbs in sand beds goes some way to satisfying my desire to mimic nature and I enjoy the effect when the inside and outside garden can be viewed together as here.



Final image for this week is back to my little version of nature click the link below to view the latest [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement The colours of Corydalis with Erythronium.....](#)