



BULB LOG 49.....5th December 2018



Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice'



**Narcissus
'Craigton Chalice'**

Once again I am finding that the flowers of these Narcissus are opening some four to six weeks earlier than they did last year emphasising to me that plants respond to the prevailing conditions not to the calendar. Over many years of growing I have experienced that depending on the conditions the flowering time of exactly the same clone can vary by as much as four months. If you check back to [Bulb Log 4917](#) you will see we were under a

cold spell with snow and ice covering the ground.



Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice'

Attracted by the chalice like shape of the corona I have been assessing this hybrid seedling for a few years now - first I wanted to be sure that this shape was stable which it has proved to be and the second important quality I am seeking is that it must have a good rate of increase and that has also proved the case, as I am gradually building it up by division from a single bulb.

I first became aware of this plant as one of the many open pollinated self-sown seedlings I had planted in the sand bed where I watched it increase to form a clump which featured in the [Bulb Log 0118](#) where I suggested that if I went on the distribute it I would name it Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice' because that is what the shape of the corona reminded me of. In the summer I lifted a few bulbs to grow in a pot to facilitate their increase and in time I hope to be able to share it around.



Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice'



Some more of the many variations in shape and colour of the Narcissus we have flowering in the bulb houses just now with many more to follow throughout the winter months and well into spring.



***Narcissus romieuxii* JWB8628**



**Narcissus romieuxii
JWB8628**

As if the variations exhibited in the many seedlings we have are not confusing enough, what about the difference between the larger paler looking flower facing away in this picture from the group in front? They are all exactly the same clone growing in the same pot the difference being that the paler one flowered earlier and is more advanced making it even more of a problem for those who have the urge to classify

everything to sort out these swarms.

A few more of the Narcissus seedlings growing in the sand beds exhibiting a range of colour.....



Narcissus seedling



Narcissus seedling



The probing leafy growth of **Tropaeolum tricolorum** always manages to squeeze between the gaps in the bulb house making a break for the open air where it is proves to be surprisingly frost hardy. The tubers however need the protection provided by the glass as they do not survive the cold in the wetter conditions outside.



Tropaeolum tricolorum

Inside the tangled twining growths of Tropaeolum tricolorum is covering the wire and plastic mesh I have provided on some of the sides.



In another sand bed I am pleased to see more growths from the **Tropaeolum azureum** seedlings have now reappeared they first germinated last year. I showed some a few weeks ago when I was a bit worried that more had not appeared however my patience has been rewarded as there are several more now in growth. The attractive leaves are of **Cyclamen mirabile**.



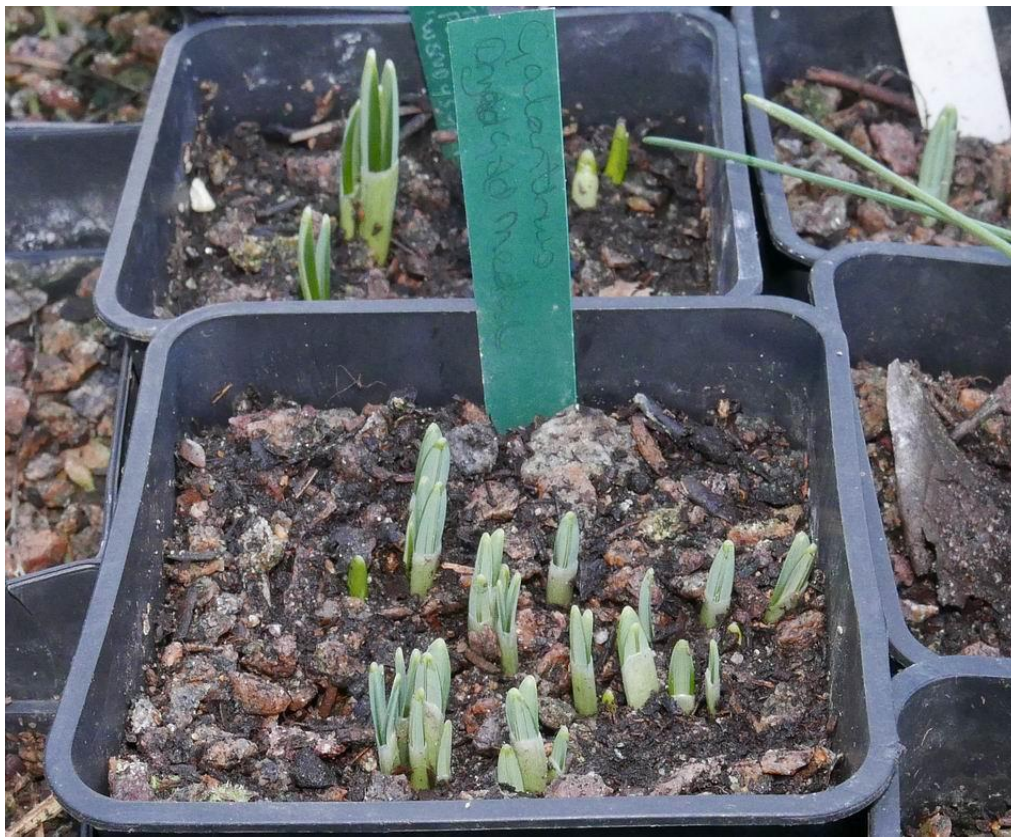
Tropaeolum tricolorum

These *Tropaeolum tricolorum* seedlings are now in their second year of growth and are heading towards the mesh support.

I am hoping that I may get a few of the first flowers next spring.

Native to South Africa ***Oxalis obtusa*** (from Namaqualand to Knysna) – our clone has pink flowers although there is an enviable range of colours in the species, white, yellows and pinks included, which is beautifully illustrated in Ron Vanderhoff's pictures on the valuable resource of the [Pacific Bulb Society](#) web site where you can read much more about this species. This new growth of leaves is often damaged by frost and damp conditions even in our bulb house.





Many of you, when repotting bulbs, will have found lots of small bulbs when you were expecting or hoping for a large flowering size bulb. This break down into lots of small bulbs is a reaction triggered when the bulb has not received sufficient water/nutrient at critical stages of growth - most importantly when the leaves are growing rapidly, which in many bulbs is now through late autumn and winter. This reaction can be used to our advantage providing a way of increasing our numbers of a particular bulb which I have done here with Galanthus 'Dryad Gold Medal'. Last year I purposely planted a bulb too shallow, in the top half of a 7cm pot, where it would be under some stress and

indeed the single large bulb broke down into many smaller ones. In August I re-planted these further down into a larger deeper pot where they will not be put under stress, can be well fed and watered and hopefully grow well. They will not flower this coming year (2019) but with good growth they should flower in spring of 2020.

This dense cluster of Crocus leaves was the result of the new corm being eaten by a mouse which allowed many adventitious buds on the remains of the previous season's corm to grow. To fully benefit from this I will have to intervene by lifting and spreading the small corms giving them more space and the



opportunity to receive sufficient moisture and nutrients. The other times that bulbs break down in size is when clumps become so congested and competition between them so intense that none of them will receive the necessary feeding – the lesson there is to divide clumps every three to five years or when you notice the drop off of flowering.



I thought I would show you a few more areas such as the cobble bed which will be among the first to break into flower in the early part of next year.



The rock garden bed on the left with the Erythronium frames on the right alongside the narrow path side bed which is planted with *Corydalis* and *Hepatica*.



The raised wall with the pine tree is also full of early flowering bulbs and plants.



I hope to tidy these areas through the winter and before the early growth appears.



These Galanthus shoots remind me of the approaching dawn when you can see the sunlight being reflected back off the clouds before the sun breaks over the horizon filling the land with light. While the bulbs are mostly underground in the winter they are far from dormant their shoots are slowly expanding pushing slowly upwards some like these poke a nose out waiting to fill the garden with colour.



I will leave you this week with the light just before dawn.....