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Bulb Log Diary

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Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister'



This week the front cover features Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister' for the second time this year. It also graced the cover with its charm in [Bulb Log 0318](#) when I pictured it on the 12<sup>th</sup> January. The timing of when these narcissus flowers open is largely dependent on the temperatures. If, like this year, it stays mild after the September storm they will proceed to flower, if however the temperature is low, then their progress will slow down so there can be many weeks or months difference in the flowering season from year to year.

I have not worked out precisely what the critical temperature for flower expansion is but generally if it stays above 5C then the flowers will advance, slowing down again if it falls lower. Referring back to another picture of this sand bed in last week's [Bulb Log 4718](#) I can see the steady increase in the number of open flowers.



**Narcissus romieuxii var mesatlanticus**



***Narcissus romieuxii* JWB8628**



**Narcissus seedling**



**Narcissus  
seedling**



**Narcissus fernandesii and Narcissus rupicola seed sown this year is germinating well.**

Many would consider this bed to be 'untidy' but all this scatter of debris is the remnants of multiple waves of colour that started last January and only finished around a month ago.

The small disturbed areas are where the birds, mainly black birds, have been foraging for grubs and other tasty morsels. I will tidy the bed up and apply a fresh mulch of shredded and composted hedge clippings - one heap waiting to be spread can be seen front left.



Despite the large number of birds feeding on the many berries around the garden none ever touch the bright red **Arisaema ciliatum** seeds. Unless I move them they remain where they fall producing clusters of seedlings next spring.



A lot of the time the birds peck around revealing the emerging shoots such as these *Anemone ranunculoides*. I am not sure if the birds mistake the shoots for grubs or if there may be a greater chance of finding some grubs there however the birds are aware of the shoots long before I am. Here is a wee challenge to test your observation can you spot the *Narcissus* seed germinating in this picture.



resting buds of the *Pinguicula* - I may even have lost some into the pond.



I am relaxed about the birds foraging around the garden accepting that they will dig to reveal emerging shoots and scatter the mulches onto the paths however I do draw the line when they got under the wire mesh of my *Pinguicula* island. They ripped away some of the moss exposing and scattering some of the



## **Pinguicula island**

I have repaired the damage as best I can securing the wire mesh and now I wait to see how many of the Pinguicula have survived this disturbance.

The birds have also had a go at the moss growing on the top of this mushroom shaped staddle stone. Over a number of years I have left the moss to grow and last autumn I scattered some *Erinus alpinus* seed across it in the hope that I might establish a colony of plants to grow there. However it turned out that last summer was unusually hot and dry so the moss which in most years would remain constantly moist was dry so none of the seeds germinated – I will try again.





Over the last week our weather has been coming from the east which is when we are most exposed and the strong winds have brought down the majority of the Acer leaves I showed last week. It also meant that we have spent the



whole week under a cover of thick dark clouds producing lots of rain and very poor light for taking pictures. I did venture out to view the garden and captured a few images such as this grouping of plants all of which still had some leaves. The Podophyllum leaves have been protected from the frosts by the canopy of Acer leaves above however they are now exposed and will soon disappear. The dwarf conifer, Chamaecyparis obtusa 'Nana', which is a cutting

from one of two dwarf Chamaecyparis growing in the Gundestrup trough (below).





The Gundestrup trough with ***Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Minima'** and ***Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Nana'** not to be confused with the much larger *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Nana Gracilis' of which a bonsai version can be seen behind – it is the bonsai on the left; the one on the right is *Tsuga heterophylla*.

The bonsai *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Nana Gracilis' shown above is exactly the same age (35 years) as the one in the front garden which I have also trimmed and styled over the years but at 4 metres tall is more representative of the mature height of this cultivar.



***Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Nana Gracilis'**



This Oxalis is nice and green just now but will be killed out when the hard frosts arrive – it comes from the bulb house where it seeds around under the staging.



**Shortia uniflora**

On my walk I spotted a couple of the Shortia which have been revealed as the herbaceous growth surrounding them dies back.



**Shortia soldanelloides**



**Rhododendron uvariifolium**

The hot dry summer has been a challenging year for many of our plants not least the larger Rhododendrons but despite the dry conditions many have managed to produce a profusion of flower buds for next spring.



**Rhododendron elegantulum**



From the seed pods you can tell that ***Rhododendron rex* ssp. *fictolacteum*** was well flowered but the hot dry conditions means that there are very few signs of the buds expanding so it will not flower next year.



Likewise ***Rhododendron bureavii*** has few flower buds but with foliage like this who needs flowers?



The garden feels much more open without the leaf canopy and more light gets through to the ground.



The various items of garden ornament and sculpture also play a more important role when the plants are not in growth.

For now a single out of season yellow Doronicum flower adds some colour to the bulb bed however the many shoots pushing through the ground promise plenty of interest to come when the growth accelerates early next year.



View



Acer leaves now cover the ground and the slab beds these will have to be cleared up when the weather allows.



Silver Saxifrage on one of the slab beds provide decoration and interest all year round and should be much more widely grown.



Among the leaves I spot something white appearing.



This is the only early flowering Galanthus that has survived growing outside in our garden – I am very pleased to see it starting to bulk up as I will be able to divide it and spread it out.

Because the *Acer japonicum* leaves are small and break down quickly I am happy to leave them as a natural mulch on beds such as these where all the plants are suited to growing in a woodland habitat.





I will leave you this week with another picture of Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister' .....