



BULB LOG 43.....24th October 2018





Beautiful colours and patterns are formed by the autumn leaves as they fall to the ground and we should take time to explore and enjoy them before starting the clear-up.



I need to qualify that statement because not all leaves are attractive as evidenced on the front drive where windblown leaves blow in from the street smothering the driveway planting and becoming a hazard where they build up by the steps.



It is much easier to lift the leaves when they are dry especially if you use one of the many leaf vacuums or blowers to gather them – all the leaves from the previous picture are now in the bulging bag.

In a relatively small area the leaf-vac that I use not only eases the task but it shreds the leaves down to a fraction of their volume.





I never discard the leaves they are nature's soil conditioner returning organic matter, nutrients and trace elements to the soil. I have compost heaps especially for leaves where they can break down into a leaf mould or if left long enough into a leaf soil. Through the years these heaps have provided the entire humus component that we need for our potting mixes as well as material for mulching the beds.

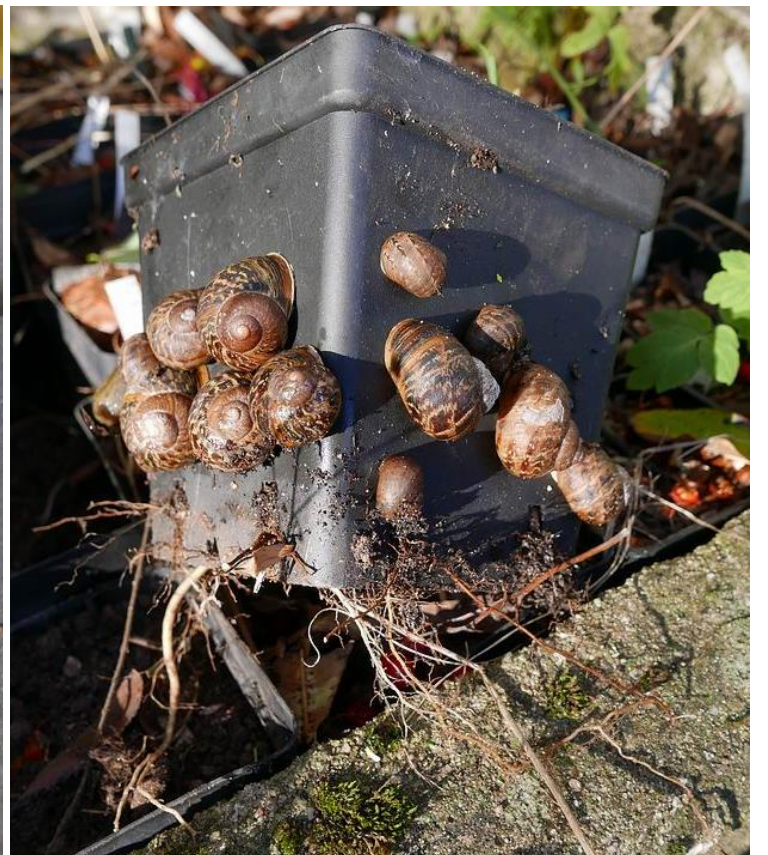
I will also often pile the shredded leaves directly on to a bed, like here under a tree to be spread as a mulch when the herbaceous growth dies back completely.



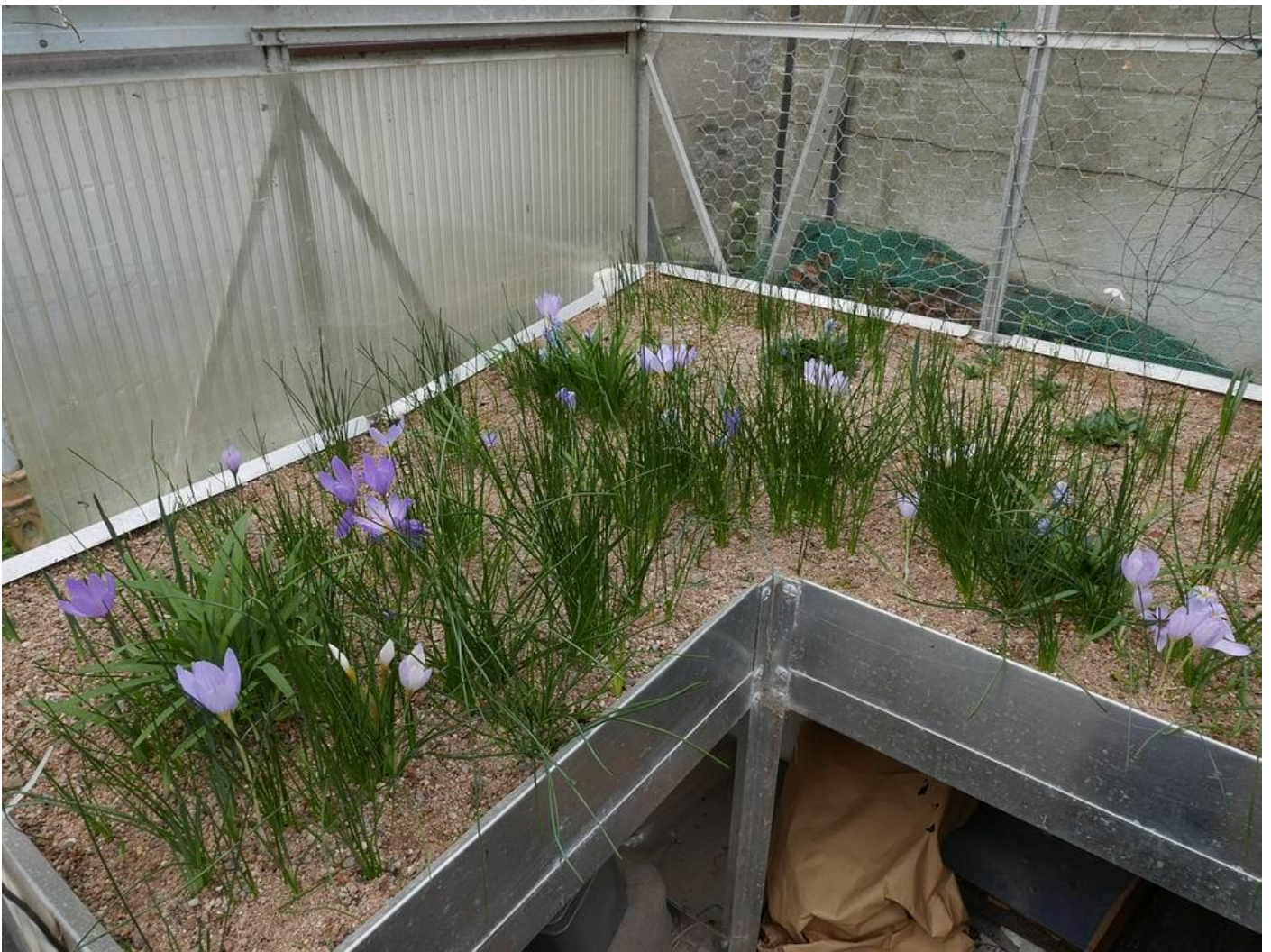
The pile of leaves can be seen at the base of this tree which has also just received its autumn pruning to retain the cloud effect foliage pads: left is before and right after.



Another seasonal task is to tidy the frames - here I am weeding and checking some of the pots of Erythronium and to my horror while lifting the pots I found evidence of the scale of our garden mollusc problems.



Slugs and Snails



The Bulb house sandbeds are providing plenty of flowering interest mostly, although not exclusively, of *Crocus*.



Hyacinthoides lingulata and *Crocus kotschyanus*



Crocus kotschyanus*, *Galanthus reginae-olgae* and *Hyacinthoides lingulata



***Crocus pulchellus*
Crocus ligusticus and
*Crocus longiflorus***



Crocus longiflorus



Crocus pallasii 'Homeri'



Crocus kotschyanus



Crocus wattiorum



Crocus wattiorum

The floral segments of *Crocus wattiorum* exhibit a very exaggerated reflexing action even at a relatively low temperature.



Bulbouse sandbed





It is very important to remove any of the fading flowers from plants such as this *Cyclamen mirabile* - if you miss any they can quickly become a host for grey mould which will cross infect any leaves they come in contact with.





Crocus flowers should also be plucked off cleanly as they collapse.



***Crocus mathewii* 'Dream Dancer'**



Crocus ligusticus* and *Crocus gilanicus

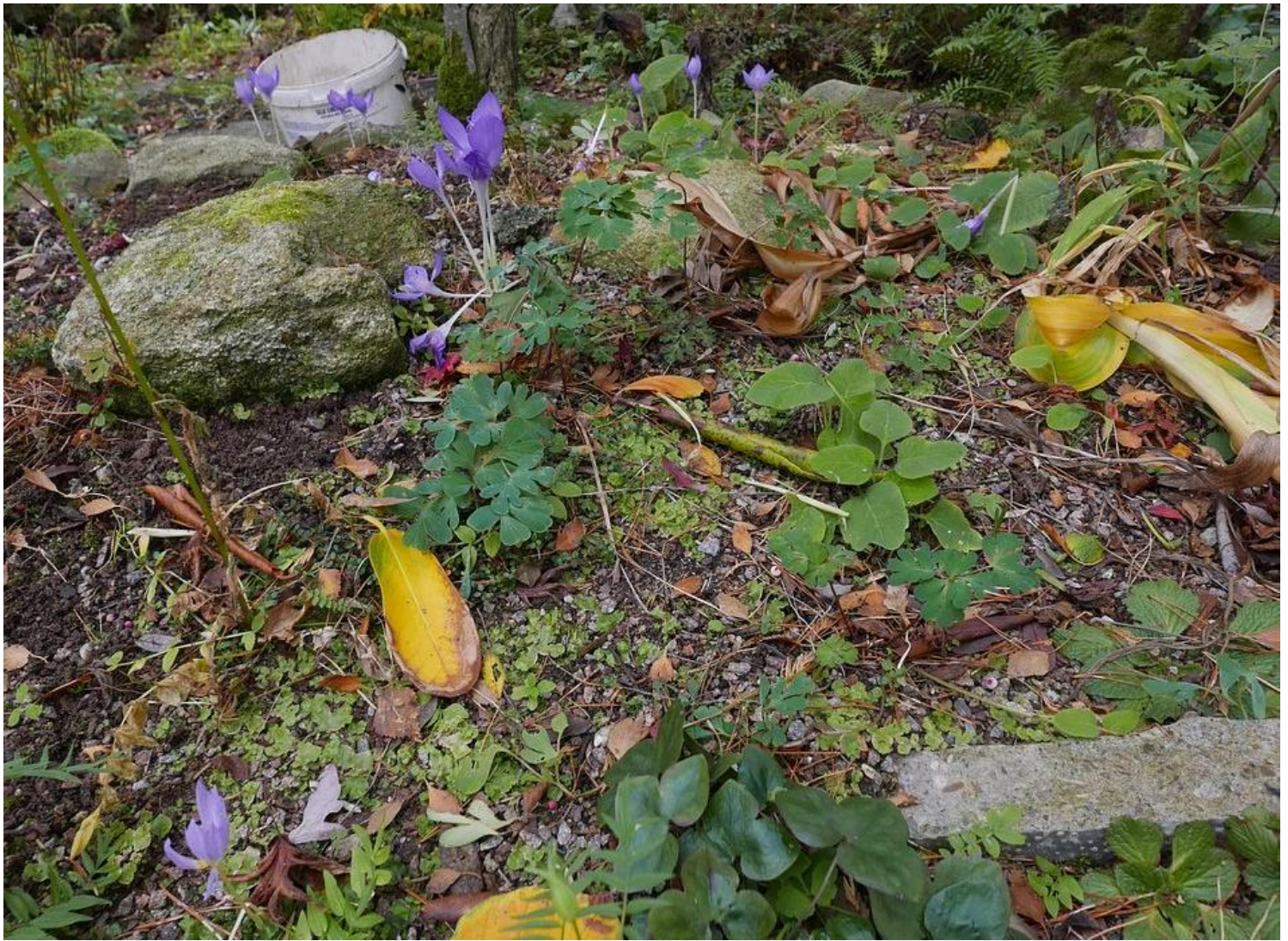


Crocus laevigatus



Crocus speciosus





I have also been tackling the growth of liverwort on the new bed by the pond. Liverwort will grow on moist ground that is not disturbed, I know of two ways to kill or prevent the growth of liverwort - they are to deny it water and or light. On the left of the picture you will see where I have gently raked the surface which I continue to do across the entire bed as regular cultivation like this will deter new growth however my long term solution is to mulch this bed.

To mulch the bed I have used another of nature's gifts to gardeners some of the annual fall of pine needles. I find these make a very effective and decorative mulch especially for a bed such as this which is primarily although not exclusively planted up with smaller bulbs. The pine needles deter the liverwort and to my eye give this bed the natural look I am trying to achieve.





The newly mulched bed where I planted out pots of seed raised *Crocus banaticus* which are currently flowering and attracting the attention of pollinators which bodes well for my aim to have a self-seeding colony.



Crocus banaticus



There are plenty of different mulches that can be used to the benefit of the plants such as in the cobble bed. This is a sand bed of bulbs where the mice found it all too easy to dig and eat the Crocus corms. As a deterrent I covered it all over with small rocks, which has not only stopped the mice from digging but once more the mulch enhances the look.



Molly likes the pine needle mulch



Crocus banaticus

I will leave you this week with a small group of Crocus banaticus rising through the pine needle mulch.....