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Bulb Log Diary

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Crocus nudiflorus



Crocus nudiflorus

Just like crocus in the spring, the autumn flowering crocuses seem to pop up from nowhere – one day there are no signs and the next there is a lovely flower. Individually the flowers don't last for that long but there will be a constant relay of flowers for some weeks to come.

They run about underground with the corms sending out stolons that will flower in two to three years. With this method of increase they rarely form clumps, instead they migrate through a bed moving out from where they were originally planted, plus of course they set seed.

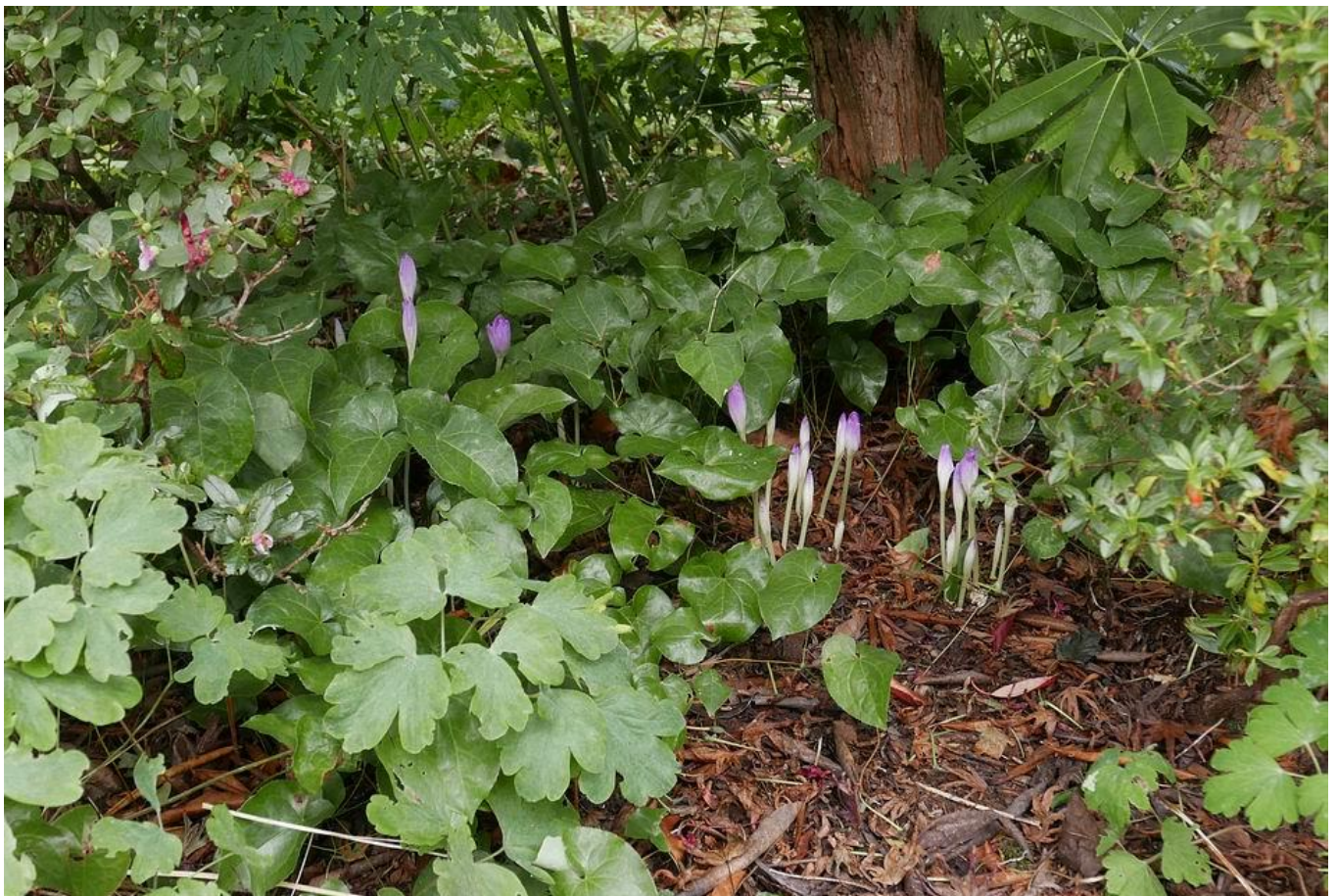


Crocus nudiflorus

More *Crocus nudiflorus* are flowering through the carpet of moss that covers this small sand bed. I used to keep the sand clean, carefully removing all the moss and other plants that seeded in, but for the last few years I decided to leave the surface growth to see how the bulbs would fare in the more natural environment. So far the bulbs have continued to grow and seed around well, plus there is the added advantage that the carpet of moss seems to discourage the mice from digging and eating the corms which had been a real problem before.



Autumn flowering Colchicum have also sprung into bloom with flowers pushing up through the ground left bare as the earlier growths retreat back underground where they will gather resources for next spring's explosion of growth.



More Colchicum rise up through the leaves of an evergreen Epimedium.



Cyclamen hederifolium are continuing to flower across the garden.



Cyclamen hederifolium

Celmisia mackau

In the past I read various articles about the fabled 'pink Celmisia' when all the ones that we grew produced startlingly white flowers. Then we grew one from seed, *Celmisia mackau*, whose flowers appear later in the season than the others and as they age they develop a pink tinge, especially when it is growing as this one is, in shade. By the time the pink develops the beautiful golden yellow central boss has turned brown.



This plant of *Celmisia spectabilis* has produced a second late flush of flowers.

Papaver rupifragrum

Gardening is a cyclical process as every year we progress through the same four seasons yet every one is not identical but a unique variation modified by the prevailing weather as well as the growth and maturity of the plants.

There are some constants in this cycle - I used a very similar image to this of the orange flower attracting hover flies on the cover of Bulb Log 3218.



I continue working through the repotting and when I tipped out this pot I find it is shared by a fritillaria and a crocus. The crocus which is well into growth is most likely to be a *Crocus vallicola* which has seeded itself in to the frit pot from adjacent pots.



There is no reason for me to break up this happy alliance as both plants are growing well and more likely to be benefiting from the company than suffering any undue competition also the crocus will flower soon and the fritillary in the spring.



***Fritillaria camschatensis* bulbs**

Working on the plunge baskets I find these *Fritillaria camschatensis* bulbs sitting just below the surface. I have learned over the years that is where they need to be to flower well – like so many bulbs that have a similar structure of many small scales and or bulbils, they want to be near the surface.



***Fritillaria camschatensis* bulbs**

Some go back into the basket and the surplus, below, will get planted directly into the garden.

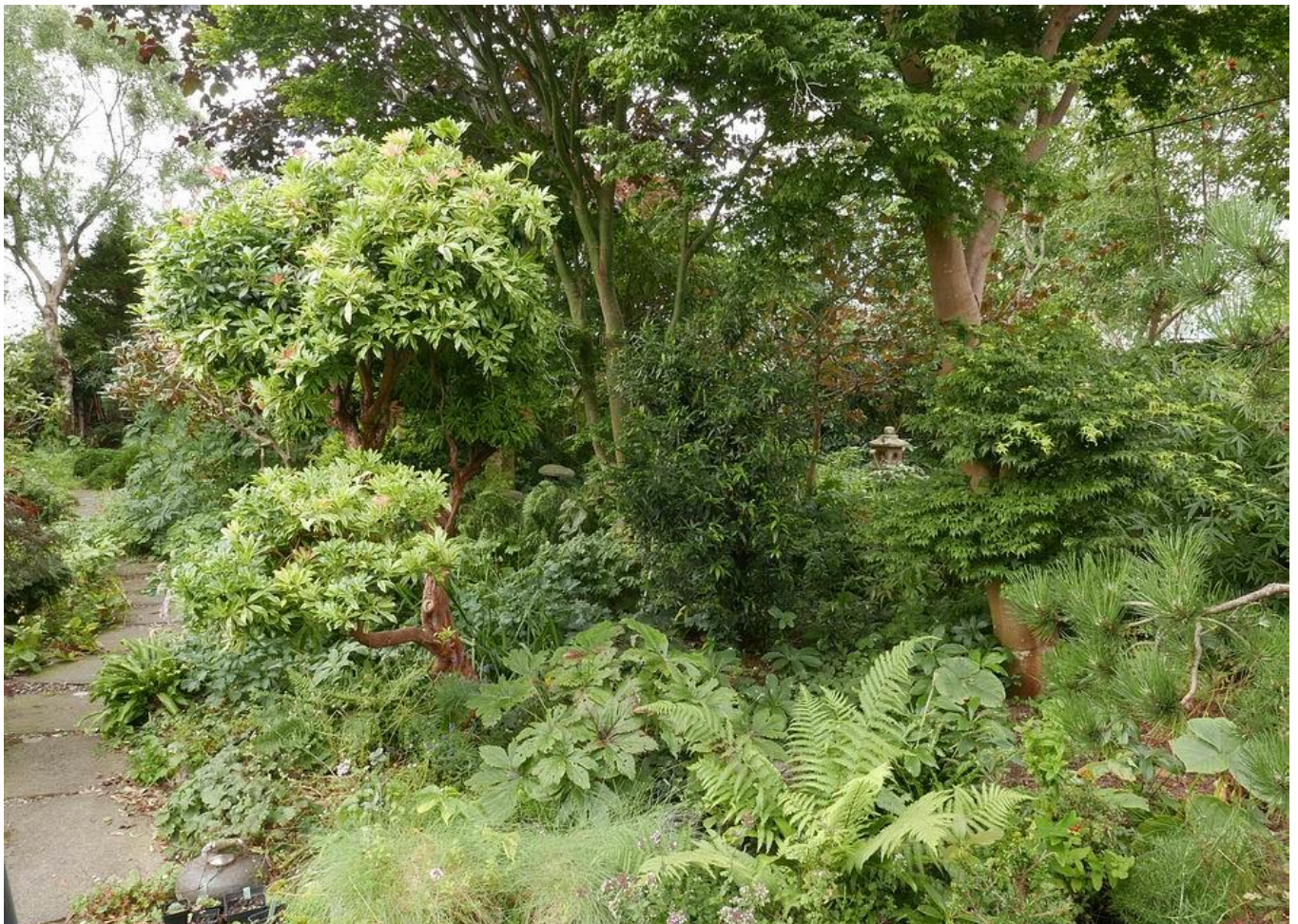


These have also evolved to send out stolons, placing the small bulbs that will form at the tip that bit away from the main bulb.



In the background I have the bulb house all repotted and ready for the first storm, which is coming next week, while the greenery in the foreground needs my attentions in the way of pruning. We spend the early part of our gardening years trying to get the plants to grow and then there comes a point in time when we have to switch to wondering how we can slow all that growth

down. Pruning the trees and shrubs to allow light into the ground level plantings is important while at the same time retaining an interesting structure such as the raised trunk of this nearly fifty year old Pieris.



I cannot emphasise enough the importance of trees and shrubs to a garden where they provide structure, decoration and atmosphere – in many ways they are the character of the garden which the other plants support and enhance.



Some years ago to lighten the canopy we removed a large branch from this *Acer palmatum* and I have allowed some of the growth that appeared around the cut to grow as it covers the cut part of the trunk.



I clip the new growths back hard every year to build a good dense branch structure.



On the trunk hidden from view I discovered a colony of snails.



The *Crinodendron hookerianum* is also going through some restructuring after being cut back to the older wood by the cold period a couple of years ago. Once more it is a case of clipping back the new growths to encourage branching plus I want to keep the bush relatively small and compact this time.



Crinodendron hookerianum flower buds tend to form back from the tip of the new growths and on spurs of older wood so pruning now should still allow for plenty of flowers in the spring, some of the buds are already forming.



Not all of the prunings need to be wasted as they can be used as cuttings and rooted to form new plants.



A new *Crinodendron hookerianum* cutting alongside one taken earlier that is already well rooted.



Rooted and potted cuttings of *Embothrium coccineum* and *Crinodendron hookerianum* taken this time last year and now ready for planting out.



Embothrium coccineum

The *Embothrium coccineum* is a relatively recent introduction to the garden and for the first years I have been shaping it to from a small standard so the long new growths been regularly pruned back to encourage branching.



Unlike the *crinodendron* the flowers of *Embothrium coccineum* tend to grow on the tips of the new growths and as I have been cutting these back we have not had too many flowers so far. This year I am leaving the tips to see if we get more flowers in the spring, then I will cut them back after flowering.



Another bank of greenery without which is currently without any flowers but none the less attractive and full of detail and interest.



Molly loves patrolling her garden and rooting among the bushes.



A relatively new landscape was formed when I created the new bed which can be seen in this view towards the pond.



The saxifrages often look at their best at this time of year as they start to grow again after a summer slowdown – this is a good time to take cuttings from them.



I will leave you this for week with another picture of a **Crocus nudiflorus** flower and pollinator.....