



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 01..... 2nd January 2019





The weather of 2018 came to a close much as it had been throughout the year, this time delivering unusually bright and mild conditions for December. I try not to use the word 'normal' when talking about weather or growing seasons because I do not know what normal is. Predictably every year and month comes around but seasons vary according to the weather and the plants respond

to these weather conditions for the timing of their growth. Just as the years and seasons go through an annual cycle the garden goes through a progression of seasonal changes but the growth of some, such as trees, is cumulative and

that is where the decisions and actions of the gardener becomes important.



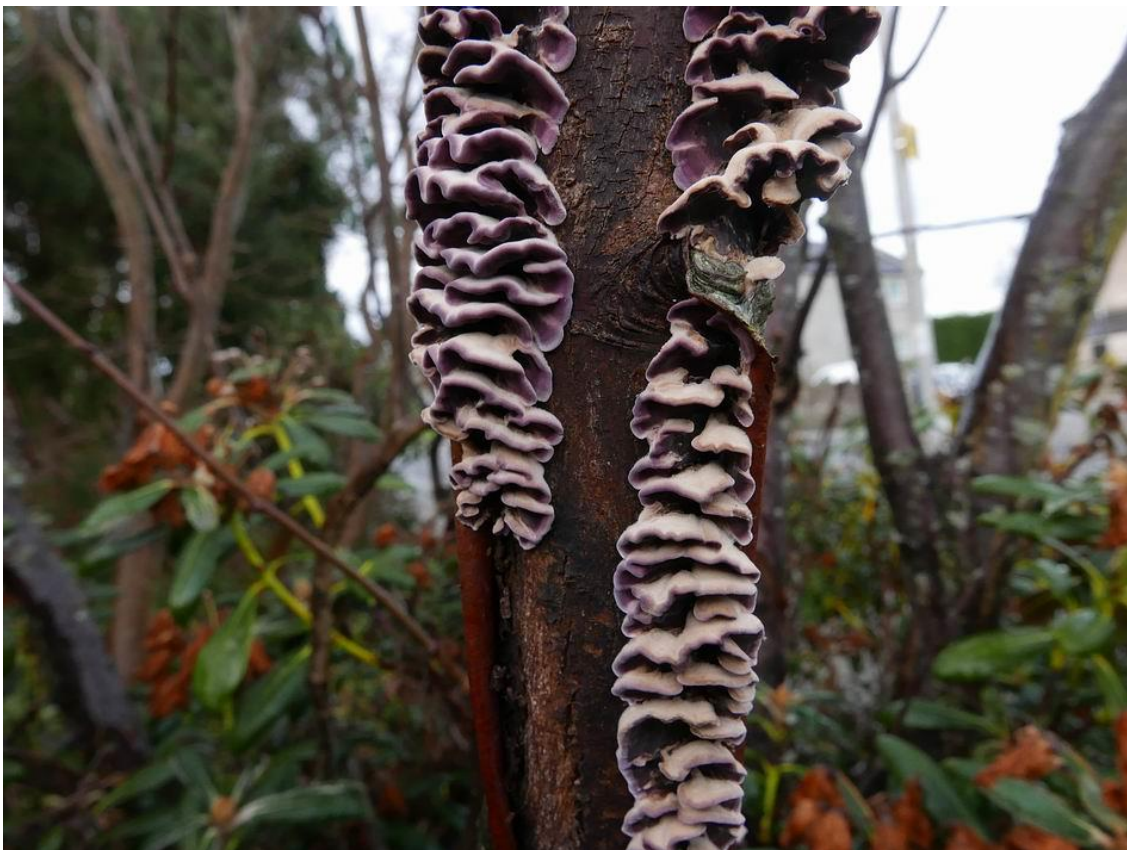
A few years ago we decided the trees (Cotoneaster) growing along our southern boundary wall had become too big and were no longer necessary to the ambience or design of the overall garden so I cut them down.

I left the lower part of the trunks partly to help support the fence but mostly because it would be very difficult to remove the stumps without damaging the wall. To stop them growing again I cut a ring in the bark just above soil level. Now I am finding fungi growing on this dead wood as nature starts the process of recycling which will eventually see the trunks and roots decay and broken down by fungi until it is returned to nourish the soil.



In the front garden an old multi stemmed tree of *Sorbus cashmiriana* rises through *Rhododendron yakushimanum* which has grown to surround the tree and for a few years we have been noticing die back on some of the multiple trunks.

This is not the first *Sorbus cashmiriana* to have suffered die back in our garden. *Sorbus cashmiriana* was among the first species of tree we planted in the garden and the first one, a single trunked form, suddenly died after growing well for twenty years.



I cut back the trunk of this, the second one we grew, at an early age to form it into a multiple trunk version and now it seems to be suffering the same fate at around the same age as the first one. I am wondering now if they have a certain life span.

One of the same fungi that is growing on the dead wood in the back garden is also growing on the stems that have died back here.

Despite the fact that there is some new growth coming from the base we decided it was time to cut it down.

We will not miss it as the *Rhododendron* fills the same space plus an adjacent *Acer japonicum* tree, also grown from seed, can now have the space to grow more evenly without having to lean away from the *Sorbus*.



Spurred on by the fine weather I am getting on with more cutting back this time I am removing some of the growth from *Rhododendron pachysanthum* which was growing out, blocking the way through a narrow path. It seems a great shame to cut off such beautiful foliage but as the garden matures we have to make the choice whether to intervene or let the shrubs and trees take over as they eventually would if left to their own devices.



The mild conditions of winter have resulted in many of the plants being more advanced than in an average year so I am also advancing the cutting back of what remains of last year's growth and leaves in the bulb bed.



As soon as I see signs of the new season's growth and flower buds appearing on the Hellebores I cut off last season's leaves to allow plenty light in and allow us to enjoy the emerging flowers.

This also reminds me I must go and check the Hepatica to see if their flower buds are advancing – if they are I will also remove their old leaves.



The Bulb Bed with the old growths cut back is now ready for the advancing mass of shoots that are just visible now, to grow uninhibited.

I pause here to thank my Canadian friend Len Rhind for his updated index to the Bulb Log – you may download it [here](#).



The new season's leaves of many of the Allium come into growth very early even though some will not flower until late spring or early summer by which time the leaves will be six months and look quite tatty.



I am also reminded that for the last few years I have intended to split some of the clumps of *Galanthus*, particularly a few in the spring bed. My best of intentions was to lift and split the bulbs at the ideal time when they are dormant in the summer but then the growth of many other bulbs and plants that share this bed is in full flush.



I have often written that there are two times to tackle a job one is when the conditions are ideal, for the plant which for bulbs is when they are dormant, but the other time is when it is convenient or remembered by the gardener. It is quite common to read that the best time to lift and divide snowdrops is when they are in growth and

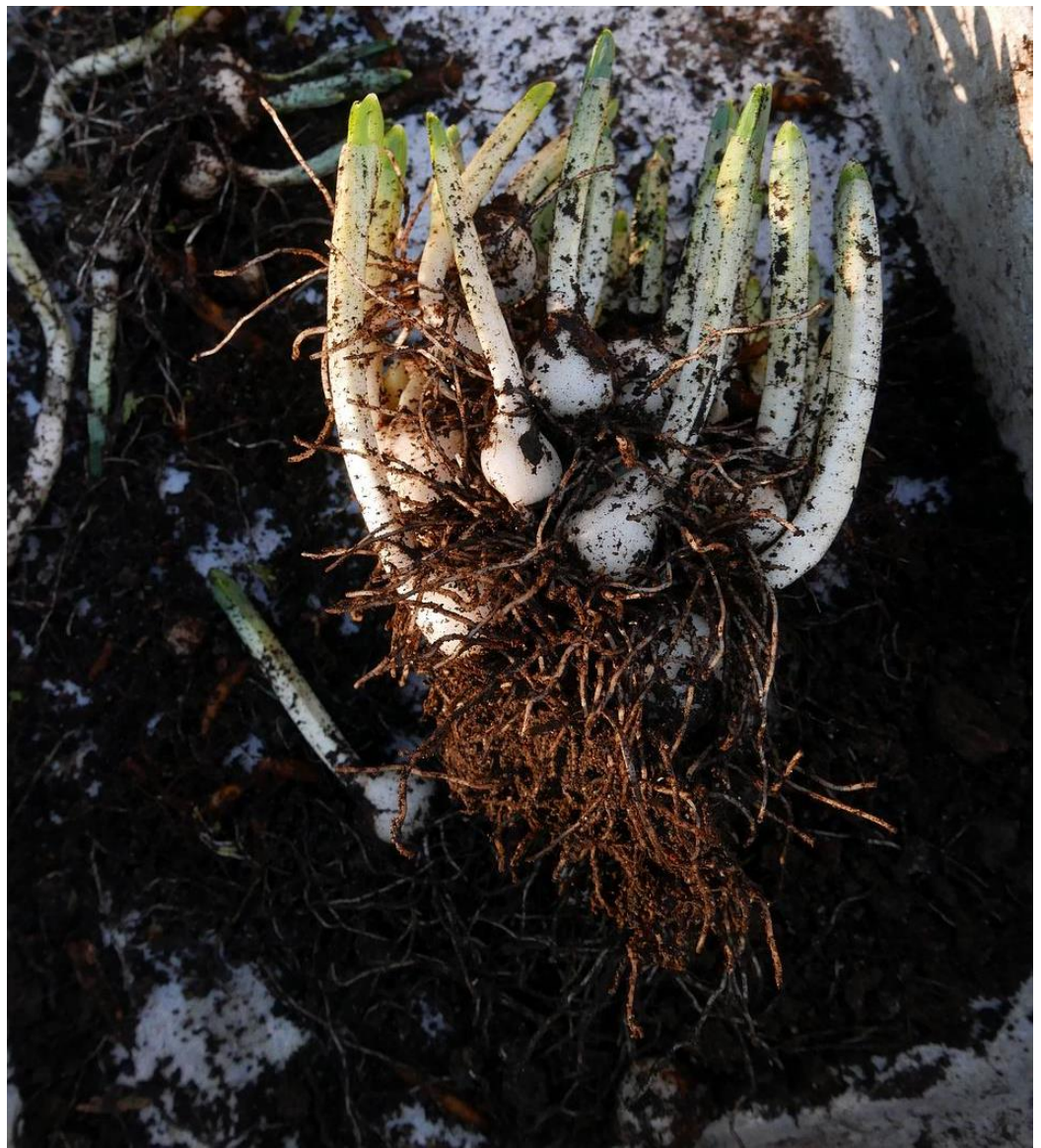
indeed many do this on a regular basis. However it is not the ideal time for the bulbs as damage and disturbance to the roots at this stage of growth will have a detrimental effect on their yearly growth. If however you can keep root damage to a minimum replanting them carefully and immediately then strong growing bulbs will recover with minimal long term effect. Here I have carefully inserted a fork deep under the clump lifting it just enough to be able to separate off one half before settling the other half back into the ground.

Once lifted you can see just how congested the bulbs have become growing one on top of the other as they compete for space to grow.

If I left them yet another year the struggle for space and nutrients would become too great and the bulbs would start to reduce in size resulting in diminishing numbers of flowers.

Starting with the bulbs on the outside of the clump I carefully hold, shake and pull them simultaneously feeling them slowly loosen until I am able to separate them out to single bulbs which with our light soil I am able to do with minimal damage to the roots.

If you have a heavy or sticky clay soil carrying out the same process of gently pulling and shaking, but with the clump in a bucket of water, is effective.



Individual Galanthus bulbs ready for replanting.



Having split two of the biggest clumps of snowdrops I started to mulch the spring bed by raking out the heap of shredded prunings I had piled there earlier in the year to compost.



Another group of early flowering Galanthus look perfect growing through the natural leaf mulch. I do not worry too much about the cultivar names of snowdrops if they are so different then they will stand out and I will remember them if not then to me they are just one of a happy crowd.



Galanthus



Narcissus 'Cedric Morris' (note to self – I must work on building up the numbers of this bulb again.)



Having dealt with the problem of bulbs forming clumps in the garden I will also have to thin out some of the clumps of Narcissus that are building up in the sand bed however here in the bulb house I can wait for the ideal time when all the growth retreats and the bulbs are in their summer rest.



Crocus laevigatus



This Narcissus seedling is a pale creamy white colour with a good shape.

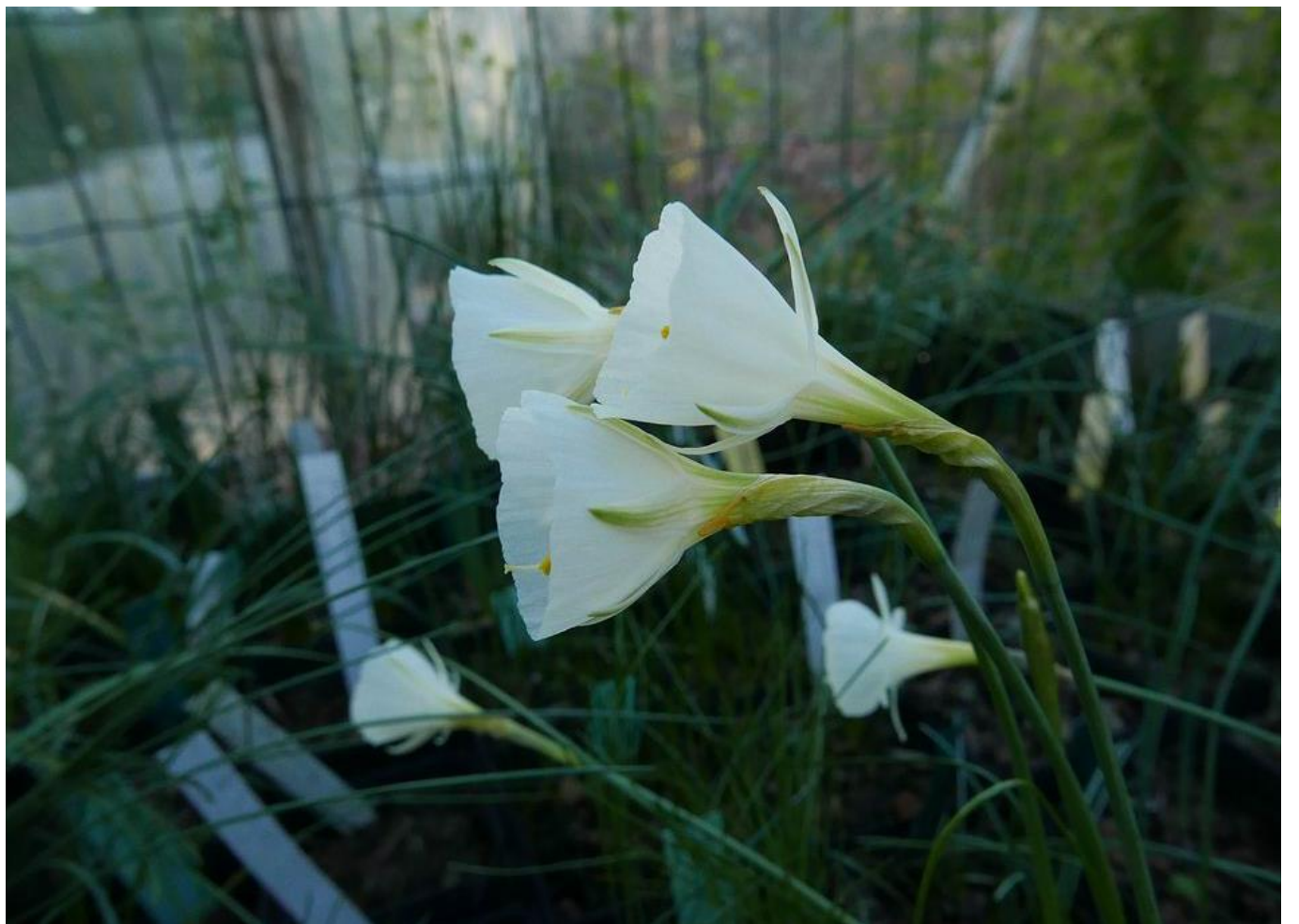
Unless otherwise named the next series of flower images are all our own open pollinated Narcissus seedlings which highlight just how variable this promiscuous *Bulbocodium* group are.



Good yellow Narcissus seedling.



We raised this from seed received as **Narcissus albicans** which is one of the names given to these naturally occurring hybrid swarms – it looks very similar to the ones that grow from our open pollinated seed.



Narcissus albicans



Narcissus seedlings



Narcissus seedlings



Narcissus seedling



Narcissus seedling



Mixed Narcissus seedlings growing in one of the sand beds.





The cycle of the seasons continues as we start a New Year and I wish you all health, happiness and good gardening. I will be here again throughout 2019 with the Bulb Log posted online every Wednesday around mid-day UK time.....