



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 20.....15th May 2019



Rhododendron fortunei



Raising plants from seed is the most rewarding way to acquire plants and the excitement when they first come into flower is such a fulfilling feeling that is further heightened when the growth rate means it takes several years for those first flowers to be achieved. We have raised the majority of plants in our garden from seed including the



Rhododendron fortunei shown on the cover.

It has been flowering for many years as it is now well over thirty years old - it can be seen standing some 3 to 4 metres tall in the background of the picture above. As all the flowers are well above my head I needed to climb up on top of the wall and still reach up to get the cover picture.

Unfortunately technology does not enable me to share the beautiful scent this plant produces.



It is *Ramonda* flowering season as can be seen in the new bed beside the pond, where they are mostly growing in the troughs which form some of the sides of the raised bed. All the *Ramonda* were originally raised from seed, in fact *Ramonda myconi* was the very first 'alpine' plant that I ever raised from seed, and since then I have continued



to raise them from seed as well as by splitting and taking leaf cuttings. Late last summer I carefully pulled some of the side rosettes, complete with a small amount of root, off the larger plants of **Ramonda nathaliae**, growing in the trough on the right of the picture, and planted them among the crevices I built into the landscape seen in the picture on the left. Now these have all established well and are also all flowering.



Ramonda nathaliae

There is plenty more opportunity in this planting to carefully pull away some side rosettes and establish more plants.



I am very pleased with the way that this relatively new bed is establishing and already I am seeing evidence that some of the earlier flowering bulbs are self-seeding.



The reverse view looking across the same bed from the opposite corner.

Ramonda nathaliae

Propagating your own plants is the key to establishing a well-stocked garden: it allows you to link and tie in the various different beds and habitats around the garden by having the same or similar plants in several different locations. We have many plants of *Ramonda nathaliae* growing in suitable habitats across the garden.





One of the plants that I use to link across the garden in the form of my 'yellow river' is *Eranthis hyemalis* and now the seed capsules are opening I will collect the seed and immediately distribute it in the areas across which I want my 'yellow river' to flow. As well as flowering early in the year the *Eranthis* are among the first of the bulbous plants to shed their seed – in our garden they are only beaten by the *Corydalis* which shed their seed a few weeks ago before disappearing back underground.



Eranthis pinnatifida

Eranthis pinnatifida has also set some seed this for us this year. I have already collected and sown the seed from the plants growing in pots while I left those planted out into the new bed to shed naturally where they will hopefully in time form a nice self-seeding colony



Growing plants from seed is an ongoing process whether to increase our own plants, to re-establish some we once grew and lost or to introduce new ones into the garden.



Propagating by taking cuttings is another method that we employ all year round and now the risk of prolonged frosts has passed I can start up my mist propagation unit once more.



These are some of the saxifrage cuttings I took late last summer and placed into a box of sharp sand and left in the open. Now they are all showing signs of growth which indicates to me that they have rooted – as I am not sure yet where they will end up I will leave them growing in the box making sure they do not dry out as the weather warms up.



Earlier it was the red flowers of *Tropaeolum tricolorum* that featured and now it is the turn of the lovely blue flowers of ***Tropaeolum azureum*** to put on a display. We only once introduced this plant into our garden when in 1989 we sowed some seed from a collection by John Watson, P&W6055, all these plants are direct descendants mostly by our own seed from that single introduction some thirty years ago.



Tropaeolum azureum

When you raise plants from seed you will get some variation in colour, form and tolerance as you can see in the following set of pictures.



Tropaeolum azureum and Tropaeolum tricolourum

John Watson also tells me that *Tropaeolum tricolourum* is very promiscuous but so far I have not detected any signs of hybridisation in any of our seedlings.



Tropaeolum azureum



Tropaeolum azureum



All of these plants of **Tropaeolum azureum** are growing well in the sharp sand of the sand beds and, like the **Tropaeolum tricolorum** below, some of their growth has escaped through the cracks and gaps in the glasshouses to grow outside where it survives the night time frosts.



Tropaeolum tricolorum



Most of the ***Tropaeolum tricolorum*** in this bulb house is growing in pots.





Ornithogalum sp.



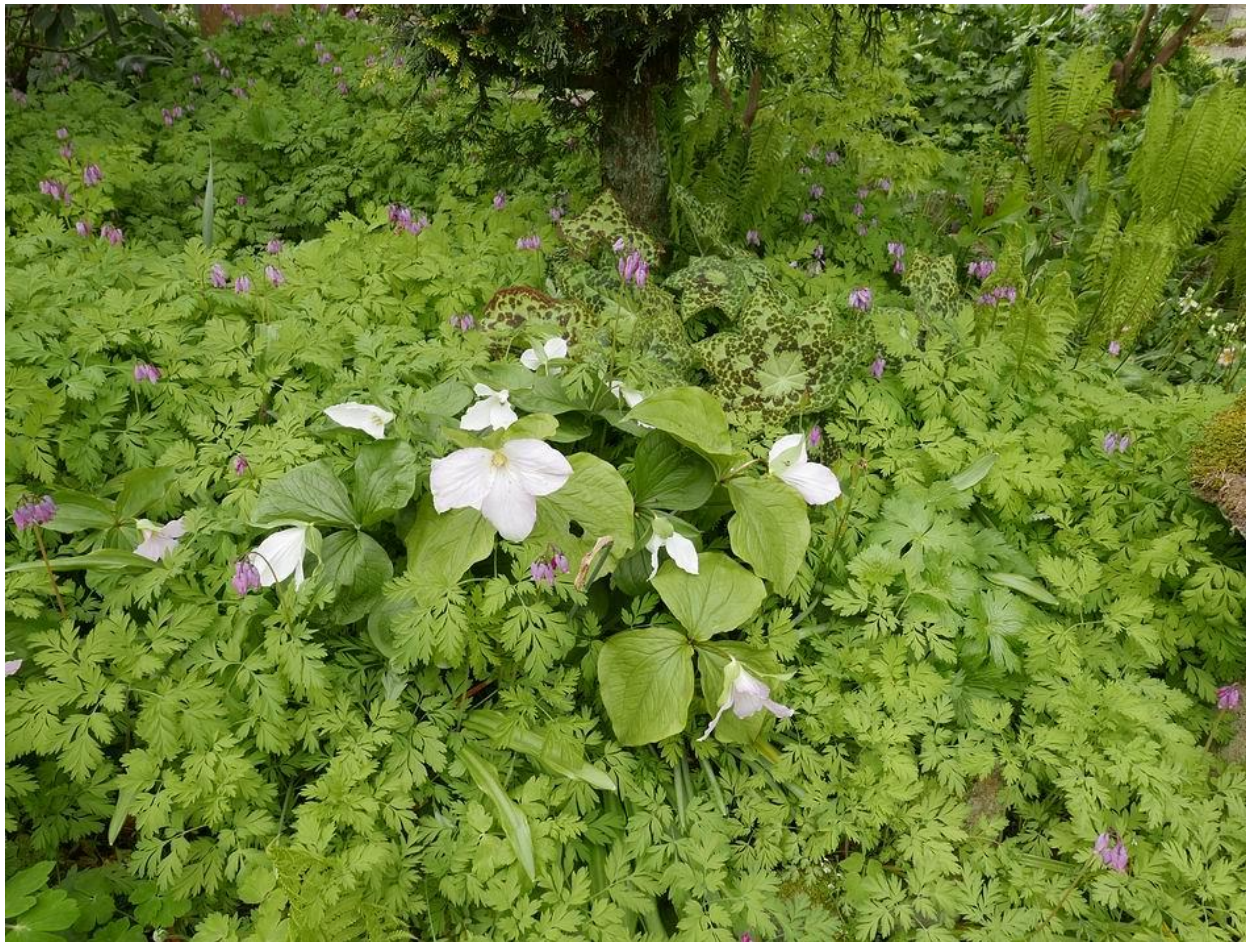
Nothoscardum ostenii



Outside the leaves are emerging on the trees and even though it got hit by frosts the Pieris is colouring up.



Podophyllum hexandrum



Trillium grandiflorum and **Podophyllum delavayi** 'Spotty Dotty' are perfectly happy to grow through the fern like leaves of **Dicentra formosa**. While at one end we are actively encouraging plants to increase, often by propagation, at the other end there are some plants that are so at home in our garden that if left to their own devices could

become too dominant. Refereeing and controlling the rate of growth in some beds, either by careful selection of the plants or where necessary cutting back, to retain a mutually beneficial balance is critical with our dense style of planting.

While it takes some years to achieve a good harmonious dense sequential planting you can achieve a good effect reasonably quickly if you have sufficient plants. Because I am always propagating we do generally have a good supply of plants so the next few pictures show a new planting made last year in the area opened up by the removal of some shrubs. Planting here will continue through this year and most importantly by seeding.





New planting



Always the last of the genus to flower in our garden is this form of **Erythronium oregonum**.



As the season progresses this bed, like much of the garden, is coming into at least its third sequence of flowering with Trillium and Fritillaria among the plants to come into flower.



Erythronium 'Susannah' and various **Trillium** growing happily through the fine foliage of Dicentra hybrids.



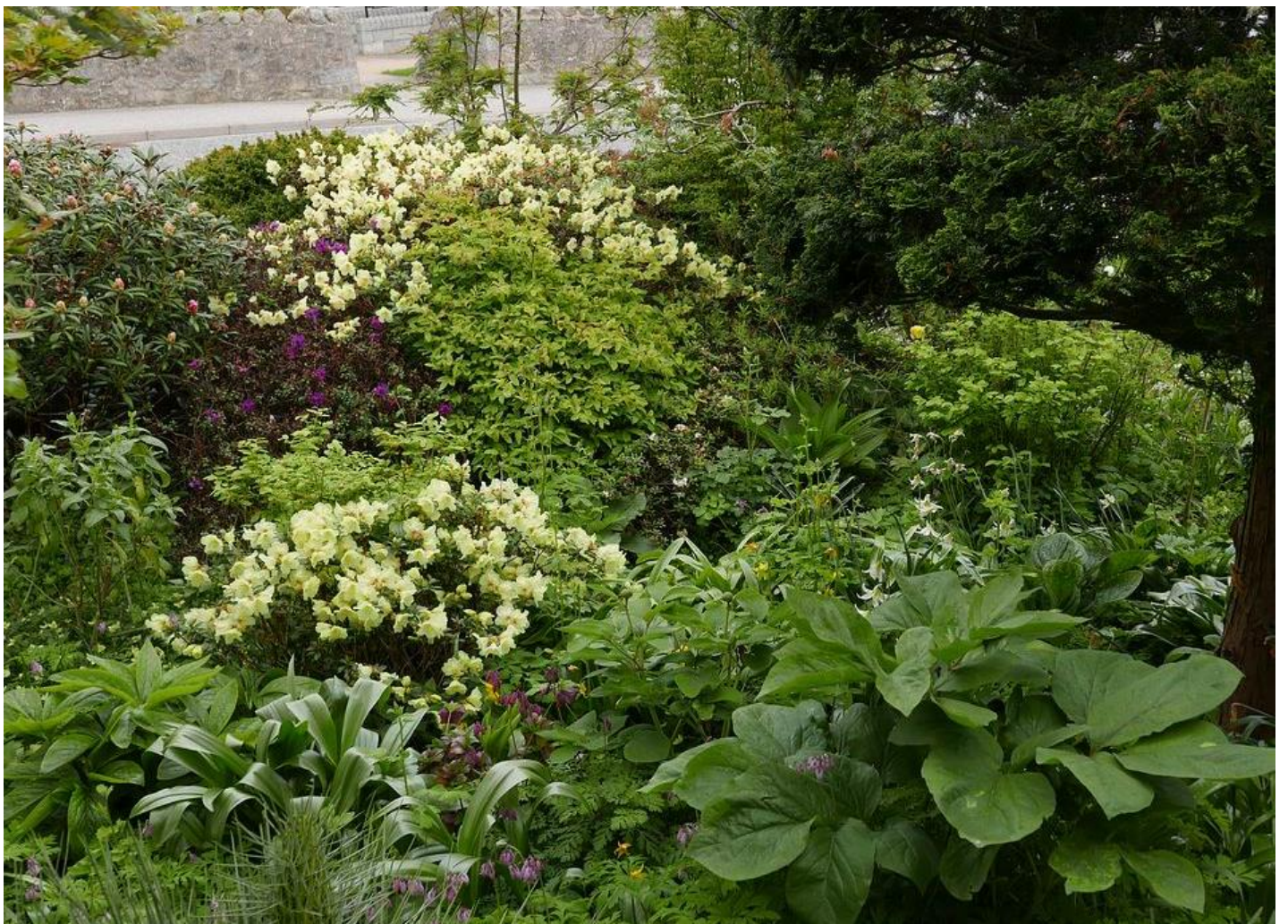
Sometimes it is the foliage that is the main decorative feature such as this mix of the fern like grey green leaves of Dicentra hybrids growing with the fresh green fern **Gymnocarpium dryopteris** and **Corydalis 'Craigton Purple'**.



Rhododendron 'Merganser'



Now for a few images from the front garden where we have a similar style of planting.





All of these Rhododendron are around thirty years old and were cut back to the ground a few years ago now they are in flower again with the white 'Dora Amateis' yellow of 'Curlew' and the pink is 'Widgeon'



I will leave you this week with one more picture of **Rhododendron fortunei**.....