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Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 51.....16th December 2020



Narcissus



Last week I bemoaned the dark wet December day and we have had nothing else since it is all very depressing - the combination of Covid preventing us travelling and now this weather means I cannot get into the garden either. Despite the restrictions the garden still manages to give us a lift - walking into the shelter of the bulb house I am welcomed by the gaze of hundreds of Narcissus flowers which seem to brighten up the darkness. I can spend a happy time checking the plants health while at the same time looking at the variations between the different clones. The light levels are so poor that I have to set the camera ISO at 3200 or use the flash to illuminate the flowers.



The same clones of Narcissus growing in the pots are coming into flower some four weeks after those growing in the sand beds. The leaves and stems are still growing in the mild conditions but the current dark days where the air is heavy with moisture means there is no evaporation and little transpiration

so I have not needed to do any watering however that could quickly change if the weather stays mild and brightens.



Narcissus bulbocodium* ssp. *genuinus



I like the strong yellow forms of *Narcissus bulbocodium*, the form above has an especially attractive pleated corona - compare that with the bi-coloured hybrid on the left with paler yellow flowers and petals that fade to almost white.

***Narcissus* hybrid**



This Narcissus seedling is paler again.



A pure white seedling that is closer to *Narcissus albidus* or *cantabricus* however the yellow tinge on the style and filaments suggest it is a hybrid.



I have suspicions that many of the forms of **Narcissus romieuxii** that we originally received, such as this one, were in fact some of the many naturally occurring hybrids.



The flowers of one of our own selections **Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister'** are starting to open now.



Narcissus seedling

Some of the Narcissus flowers stand out because of their colour but it is more often the shape of the corona that can make them distinct. Above I show two views of a seedling with what I find an attractively shaped corona - this is from the same seed batch that I selected Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice.



Narcissus bulbocodium

These two forms of Narcissus bulbocodium were raised from our own seed and because the flowers were open pollinated it is difficult to tell if they have any hybrid genes in them.



The cold wet conditions are the perfect growing conditions for grey moulds and I need to check the plants regularly. Mould often starts forming on the pollen and older flowers are especially susceptible. Above I show an old flower infested in mould which has led to the infection spreading to a still fresh one this happened in less than two days.



Narcissus 'Cedric Morris'



Narcissus 'Cedric Morris'

Coming into flower in December, Narcissus 'Cedric Morris' is the first of the trumpet daffodils to bloom. We have grown it for many years firstly in pots where we built up significant numbers which led me to plant it in a number of positions in the garden. Sadly it slowly dwindled out in the open with all but one planting disappearing completely and even that shrunk down to just a few flowering bulbs so this autumn when the leaf growth appeared I carefully lifted them and now I am growing them in a pot again.



Corydalis 'Craigton Purple'

The new leaf growth of Corydalis 'Craigton Purple' is clump forming, differing from the related 'Craigton Blue' shown below, which forms more of a mat: both will retain their foliage until it dies back for the summer months.

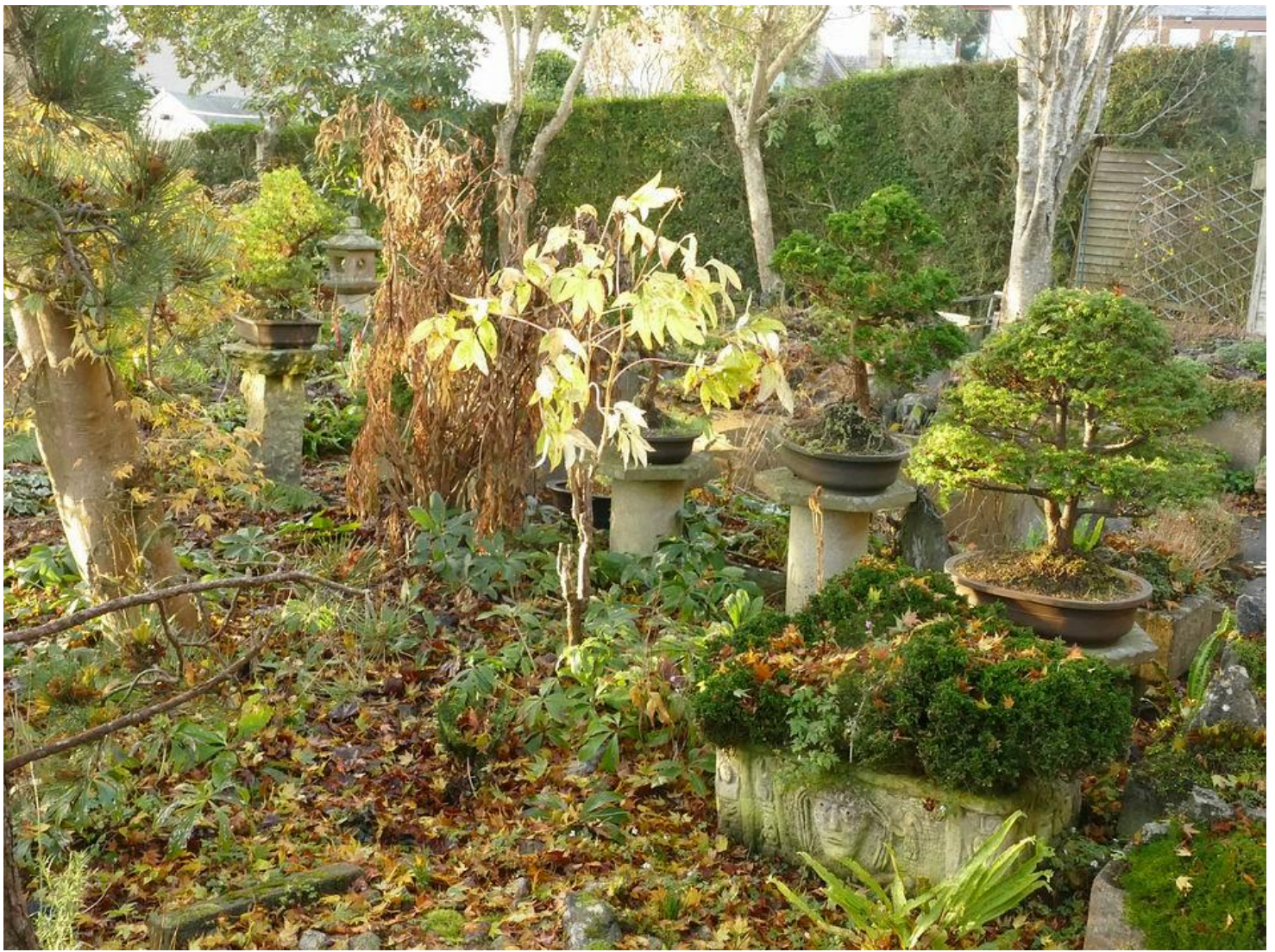


Corydalis 'Craigton Blue'

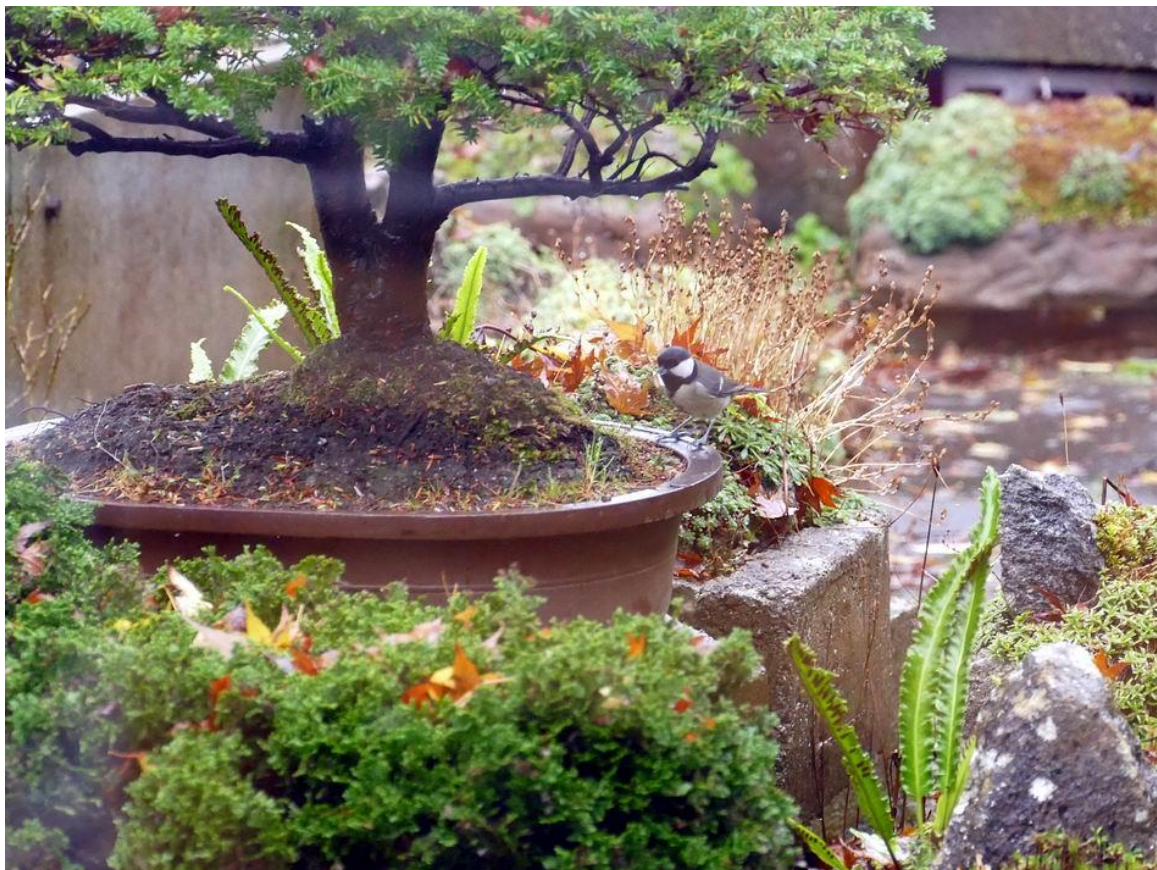
Some hellebores, ferns and Epimedium are evergreen in our garden retaining their old foliage all through the winter. I like to cut this old growth back when I see the first signs of the new shoots appearing early in the year.



Helleborus and Epimedium



These two tree peonies display their old leaves in very different ways: the yellowing leaves of *Paeonia* 'Feng Dan Bai' put on a lovely display as they slowly turn from green to yellow before dropping off, while the leaves of *Paeonia delavayi* in the back ground just turn brown then hang in a very unattractive way. Despite their unattractive



brown appearance I do not rush to remove them because I often watch a number of birds including the Wrens foraging among the brown foliage.

We have created our garden habitats just as much for the birds and wild life as for the plants. The garden stands out as a small open woodland with many trees and shrubs to provide food and cover for the birds – even the bonsai receive the attention of the foraging birds.

A friend who lives around 500 metres away has a typical garden for this area that is made up of a lawn surrounded by narrow borders of roses and despite having bird feeders he gets very few birds – this is because of the lack of habitat and cover.

The bird feeders filled with sunflower hearts help attract the birds closer where we can see them easily from the house. I took all the remaining images from my work table through the windows in very poor light and while they are not the sharpest they give an idea of the range of birds that bring us so much pleasure.



Great Tit and male Black Cap



Male and Female Siskin



Male Siskin



Male Goldfinch and Chaffinch



Wood Pigeon

As well as the many smaller birds we have families of Wood Pigeon that nest in the trees.....