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Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 30.....22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020



*Hypericum reptans*

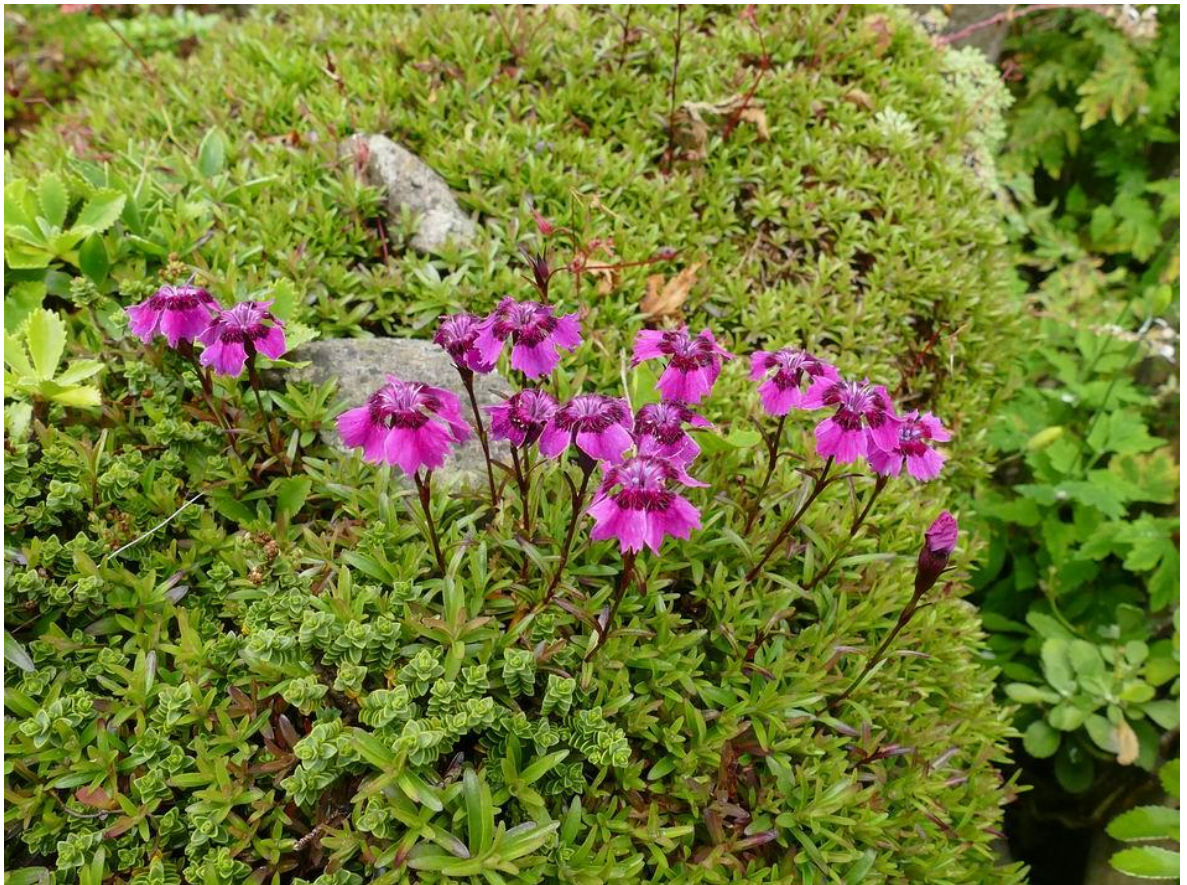


## **Hypericum reptans**

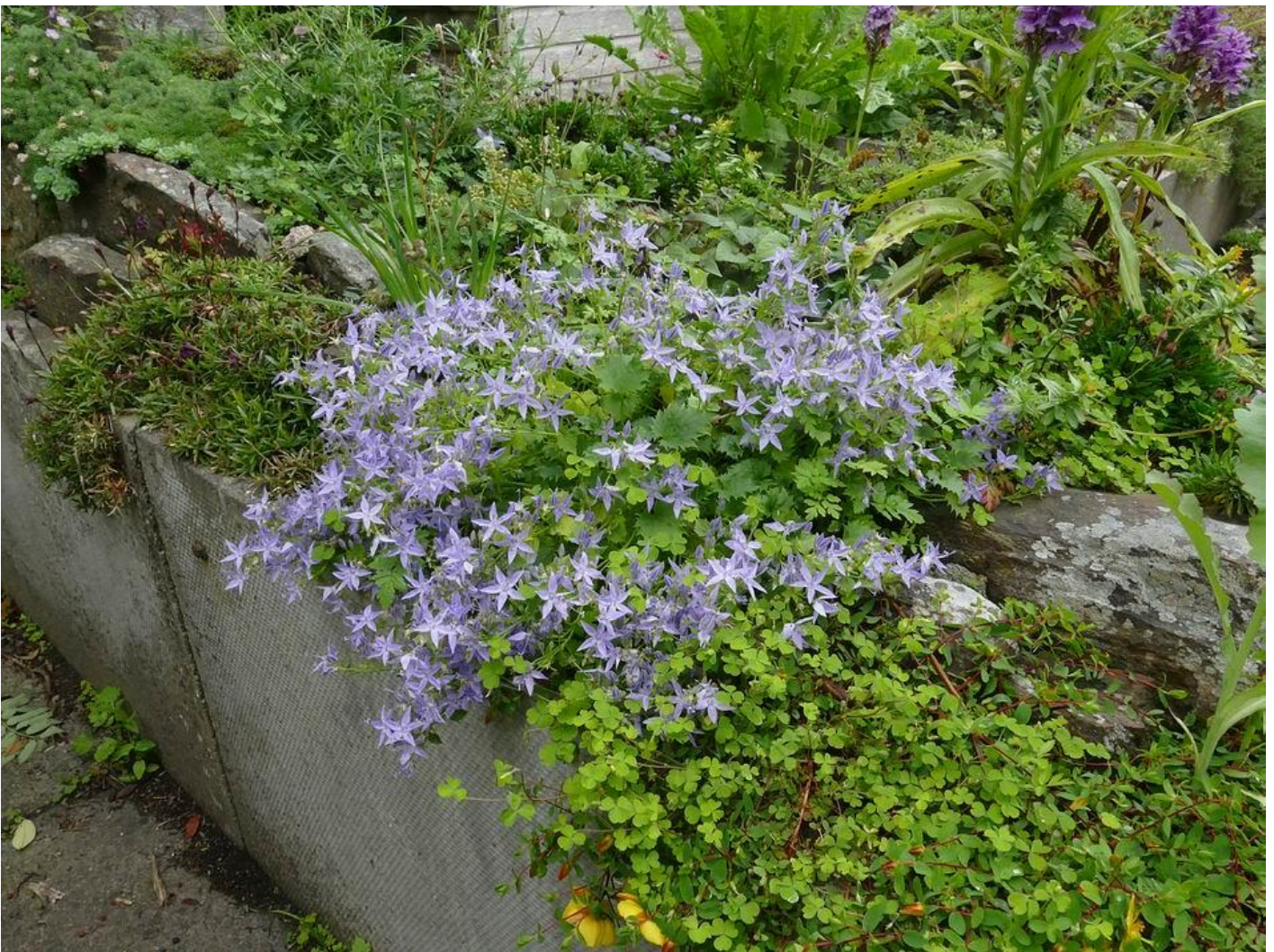
There are a number of plants that have been part of our garden from the very beginning and in that sense they have become signature plants - *Hypericum reptans* is one of those plants. Native of the Himalayas It grows in the slab beds where it creeps over the edges, often trailing all the way down to the ground. This geographical form

has the added decorative feature of red markings on the buds contrasting beautifully with the yellow flowers which are large in scale when compared to the size of the leaves.

This lovely dark form of ***Dianthus alpinus*** is of a similar vintage in the garden which along with the *Hypericum* originated from Jack Drake's Inschriach Nursery forty plus years ago and kept going by cuttings and seed. When you start out gardening you tend to get hold of as many plants as you can and that is what we did – we bought plants from nurseries, swapped plants with friends as well as raising hundreds of types from seed. We have almost certainly



lost more plants than we grow and this is an important part of the gardening learning process – understanding why plants don't survive is a valuable lesson to learn. Sometimes we can manipulate the habitat with troughs, raised beds, etc, to allow more plants to grow but the best advice is to work with the plants that like you. No matter what your conditions are there will be a wide range of plants that will grow well and these are the ones you should be propagating by whatever methods you can, cuttings, division and seed.

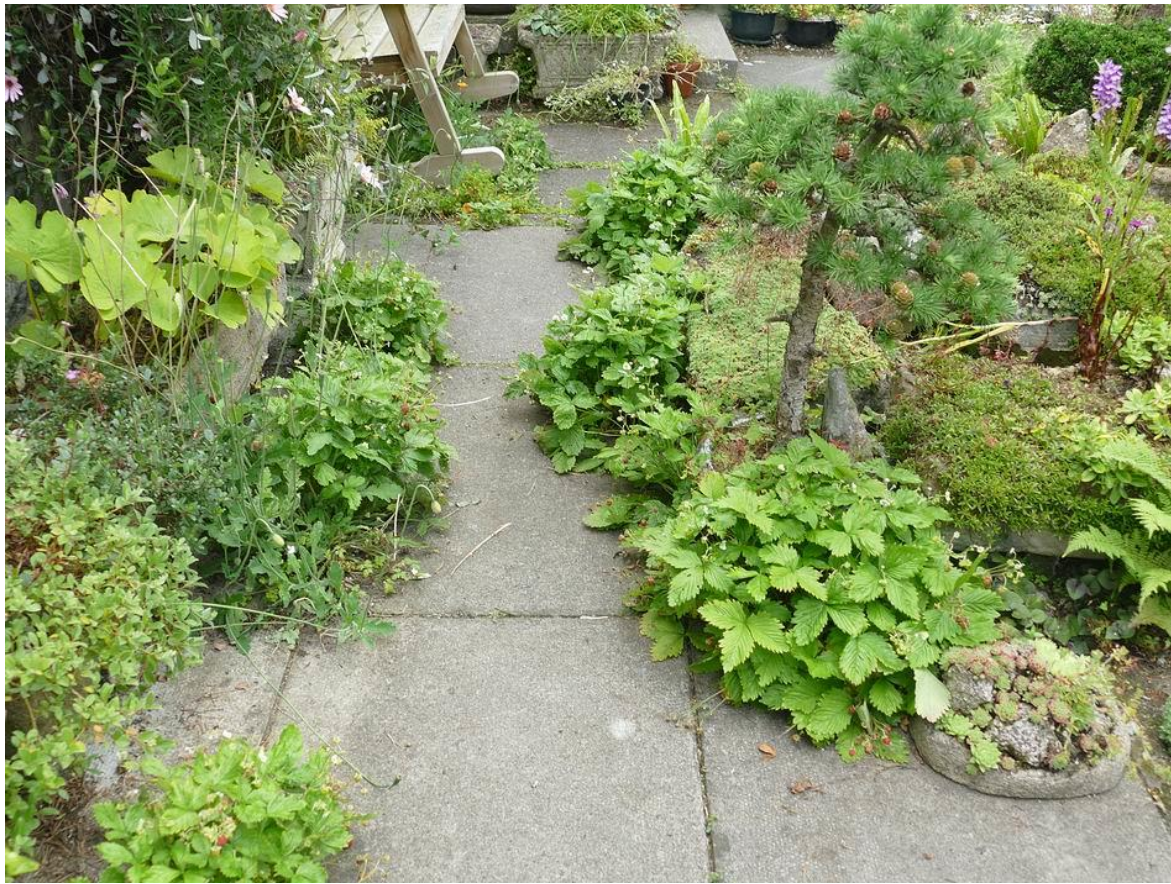


***Campanula garganica***

After the winter, and an exceptionally dry spring, the saxifrages in the troughs looked like they were barely clinging to life – a few did succumb and are no longer with us. Since that dry period our summer weather has reverted to the cool wetter conditions typical of this part of Scotland and it is amazing how the surviving saxifrages have responded by growing vigorously merging together



and completely covering more of the rocks. Through the years we have tried and lost many saxifrages and it is the ones such as these that have survived that we take cuttings from.

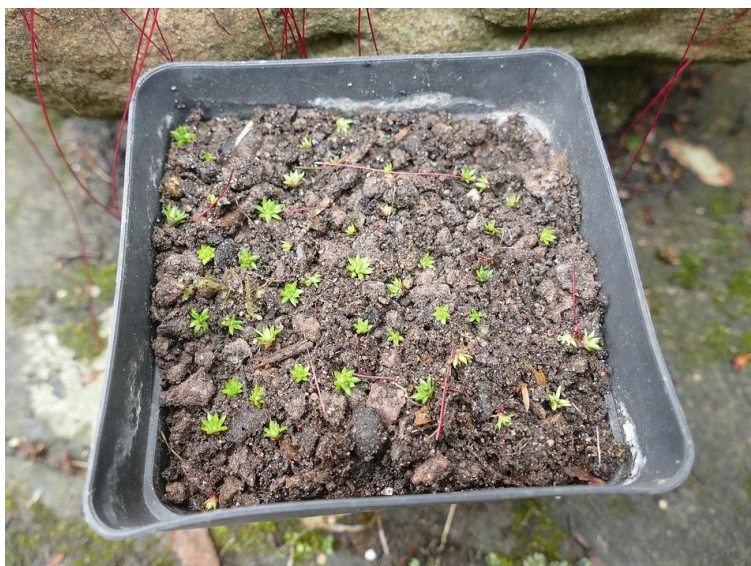


There are many different types of gardeners: there are those who want to be in complete control only allowing plants to grow in designated areas and then there is the group that I fall into, where we welcome the spontaneous natural introduction of plants. The gaps between the paving slabs are crevice gardens and it is amazing how many seeds get blown into the gaps quickly germinating in the fine soil also blown and washed in by the rain. If we left them

all the growth would eventually form its own environment with the growth spreading out until the slabs would be covered over completely by these pioneering plants – often called weeds.



We do control this growth in the main areas but towards the edges we are happy to leave certain plants like the alpine strawberry, *Fragaria vesca*, to provide decoration as well as a tasty snack for the gardeners and wild life.



### ***Saxifraga brunonis***

I like plants that grow themselves such as *Saxifraga brunonis* which like strawberries sends out shiny red runners at the end of which are tiny plants hoping to land in a hospitable environment where it can lay down roots. The accumulation of detritus gathered by the brick that the trough sits on is suitably moist and a number of the plantlets have broken free from their runner and rooting into the moist medium. It is a very shallow layer and will quickly dry out so I have carefully transplanted the tiny plants into a pot along with others that I broke off, to grow on until they are big enough to plant out into other troughs. This is a clonal plant that we have grown for many years and as it has never set seed this is the only way to increase it.



We have not grown **Embothrium coccineum** for very long so I am still learning the best way to work with it. We need to control its growth and my aim was for a small semi standard tree type shape so I have been doing a lot of pruning and shaping in the early years. To know the best time to prune a shrub you first need to understand the growth; such as are the flowers produced on the tips or in the side nodes. Shaping the

tree was the first task so I did not bother about getting flowers but now it is achieving the size I want I am trying to prune to encourage as many flowers as possible and they do appear on the tips of the new growth. There is a common rule of thumb that works for most shrubby plants and that is to prune immediately flowering at that seem to work for the *Embothrium*. I want to encourage as many short branches as possible so I have done some more severe pruning and I am very interested to see the mass of side buds forming around this cut branch this gives me confidence that I can cut it quite severely if required.

My first instinct with any plant is to propagate it and indeed I have used many of the pruned tips as cuttings to produce a number of back up and spare plants such as these two rooted cuttings on the left, *Crinodendron hookerianum* and *Embothrium coccineum* on the right.





I went to repot some small **Eranthis sibirica** tubers only to find that they were active growth. We often describe bulbs as being dormant in the summer months and many are apparently sleeping underground but they are not completely inactive. Many such as Narcissus may have no evidence of activity but within the bulb development and growth process are slowly taking place. Because of the cool moist summer we are having the growth of this Eranthis is quite advanced but I suspect it will not appear above ground until December/January so I will have to ensure that should we get a warm sunny period the compost does not dry out completely.



### Sand Plunge Bed

The bulbs growing in the sand plunge beds have been growing so well that last year I lifted and divided one section give the plants a bit more room for growth and now I am doing the same in a few more sections.



These are mostly Narcissus bulbs and you can see that they are growing and increasing very well especially when they are at a reasonable depth which in this case is around 7cms or more deep.



A few bulbs that were too close to the surface had gone into a typical survival reaction when they are too hot/dry during the growing period: that is to break down into many smaller bulbs.





Planted since 2013 it is amazing how many bulbs there are now in this 60 x60cm section.



I found the easy way to grade the bulbs for size was to use a 1cm mesh.



The larger bulbs went back in and the smaller ones will be passed on as spares. The depth of these plunges is 15cms and I would say that is the minimum for successful growth - ideally the deeper you can have it the better for the bulbs especially in hotter areas.



A deeper plunge provides a larger volume of sand allowing the growing environment to be more stable with smaller swings in moisture and temperature levels and the bulbs will be able to seek the cooler and moister conditions provided by the greater depth.

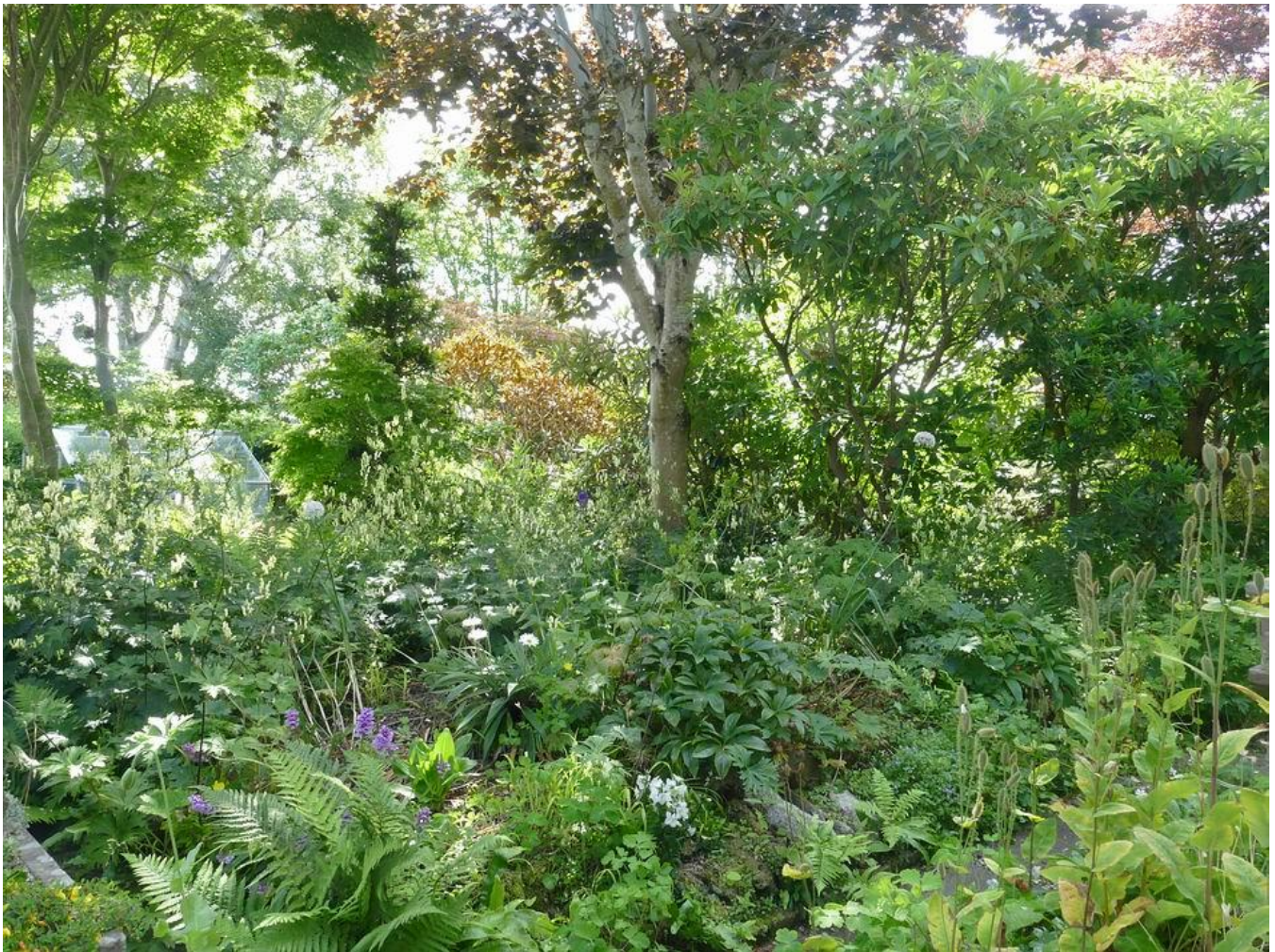
**The smaller surplus bulbs.**



The garden feels most like a woodland at this time of year with all the trees having a full canopy of leaves.



Under the trees the early flowering bulbs are all resting underground and now the beds are full of plants such as ***Aconitium vulparia*** which seeds around producing large spreads of colour that add to the woodland feel.



View across the bulb bed.



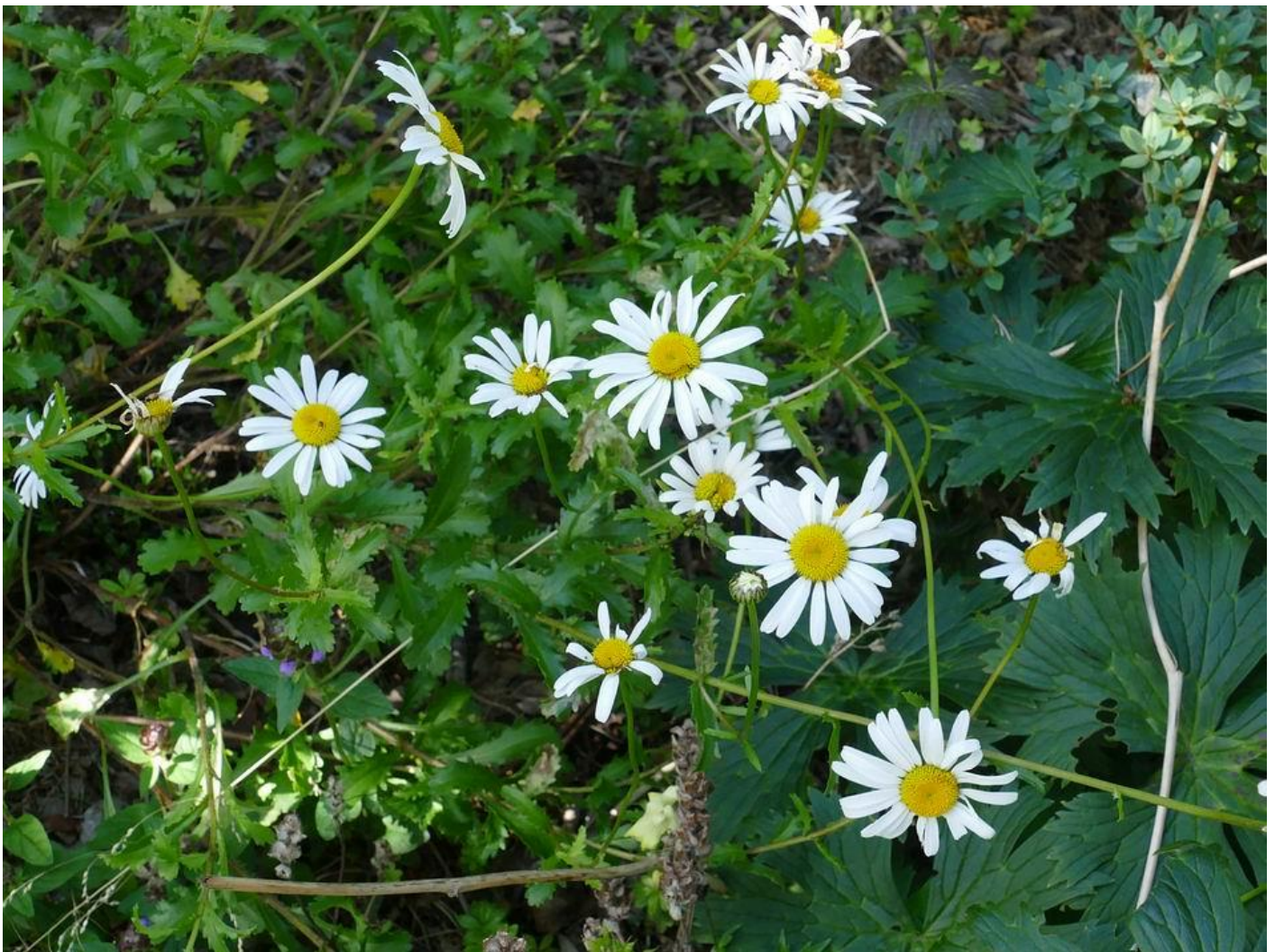
Feverfew, **Tanacetum parthenium**, in one of many plants we allow to seed around and are rewarded by a long succession of the cheery white daisy flowers that are also a very valuable resource for the garden insects.



**Tanacetum parthenium** flowers also bring light into the shaded areas. Should you want it is easy to control the spread of these plants by cutting them back before the seed is shed.



Other white daisies I have introduced to the garden includes **Matricaria recutita** one of the Mayweeds, above and *Leucanthemum vulgare*, below.



**Leucanthemum vulgare, Oxeye Daisy.**



Some of our white daisy flowers are more exotic such as the soft leaved **Celmisia mackau** from the Banks Peninsula on the South Island of New Zealand



**Campanula persicifolia** is another great plant to seed around the bulb beds that also adds to the natural woodland feel that we try to achieve in the garden and once more I much prefer to grow them in a natural way rather than as an isolated clump in a border.



The diminutive form of the above that goes under the name of **Campanula nitida alba**: be aware that most seedlings raised from this form will revert to the larger type only a few will have the dwarf nature.



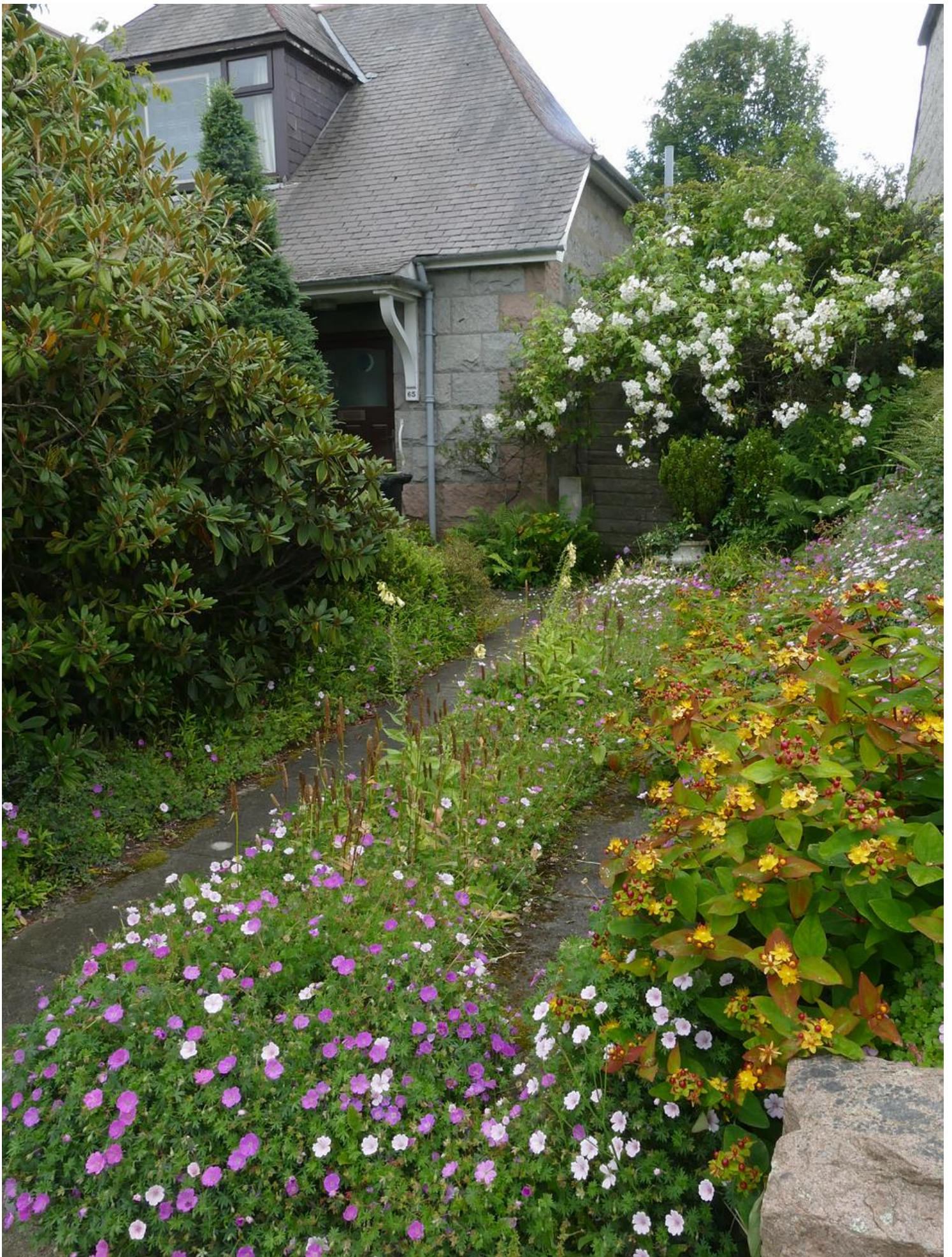
The last plant for this week is an old rambling rose that our late friend the great gardener, Tom Smith grew in his magnificent garden and on one visit he asked me if I could propagate it for him so I took several cuttings.

I returned several plants to Tom but kept one back which we planted across our side fence where it now forms a great cascading barrier that is armed with fearsome thorns.



The clusters of pure white flowers look especially beautiful against the blue sky and if that is not enough for your senses it emits also fills the area with the most beautiful scent.





I will leave you this week with the rose at the top of the driveway.....