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# BULB LOG 15.....14th April 2021

Erythronium japonicum

The cold artic weather has continued for over a week, as each morning we wake to find a light covering of snow has covered the garden. During the day this snow melts away where the sunshine reaches but scattered snow showers continue through the days.
Most of the plants we grow cope with the frosts by collapsing on the ground gradually rising up again as the temperatures rises.
Nature creates and destroys in equal measure and we have experienced that this week, when the gale force winds that persisted for a few days, blasted freezing air around the garden, trashing the plants at all levels from the ground up to the taller shrubs. Many of the plants we grow have evolved in more stable climates than ours where spring is clearly defined so they respond to the milder conditions by springing into growth not expecting that the winter weather can return at any time.
In addition many of our plants are native of woodlands so have not evolved to withstand strong winds. We are used to losing early Rhododendron flowers to frosts but I cannot remember having had such wide spread damage across the garden before –walking around at what would normally be a glorious time of flower and emerging growth it is devastating to see the damage to so many plants.

We often experience snow in April and May but most times it quickly melts away leaving the plants undamaged.

The Rhododendron flowers that were approaching their peak last week were shed by the plant in the course of twenty four hours due to the freezing conditions and gale force winds.

Now instead of a colourful pink display to attract pollinators, the flowers, looking like used tea bags, lie on the ground below the shrubs as slug food.

Woodland plants have not evolved resistance to strong winds as is illustrated with this **Trillium grandiflorum** which has had its leaves damaged, not by the frost, but by the winds.

This plant of **Trillium kurabayashii** is lying collapsed on the ground as a reaction to the night time frosts then as the sun warmed the air it slowly stood up again and this cycle was repeated most nights this week. You can also see the damage the wind has caused to Anemone ranunculoides which would normally be forming a smooth lush green carpet rather than the stems being scattered every which way by the strong swirling winds.

Now the winds have eased the **Anemone ranunculoides**, like other plants, is starting to pick itself up again and so is the gardener because it was not easy to walk around the garden and view the damage after the worst three days of weather. While it is the damage that jumps out and sticks in your mind there are fortunately many plants that were not damaged too severely or will recover quickly.

Some of the Helleborus flowers have suffered wind damage but most are looking good as they also go through the routine of collapsing in the night time frosts slowly rising up with the sun in the morning.

Some of the smaller Narcissus cultivars are flowering in the cobble bed.

**Muscari and Narcissus cyclamineus** in a slab bed are also unfazed by the cold conditions.

Alpine plants such as these Saxifrages which have evolved in cold windswept exposed environments have also come through more or less unaffected by the conditions.

Sadly I cannot say the same for the beautiful **Erythronium hendersoni** which, like so many others around the garden has had its flowers stems broken over by the wind.

I was lining up a picture of these **Erythronium hendersonii** flowers to feature as next week’s cover picture but sadly that is not to be.

Growth in the Erythronium plunge beds has also accelerated but sadly here all the early flowers stems were also cut down in the gales – fortunately the majority are still to come.

The first of the Erythronium revolutum flower stems lie snapped over but because the stem is kinked, not broken, the flowers will continue to receive some nourishment and may still try and turn upwards and open but I doubt if they will be able to set any seed.

One of the many advantages of growing a wide range of plants is that while we have lost this week of flowering in the garden we can look forward to many more flowers in the coming weeks. In addition, because we raise most of our plants from seed, there is a good variation and they do not all flower at the same time: there are plenty more Erythroniums that are not at such an advanced stage of growth and are unharmed and will soon be in flower.

The scene of devastation in the bulb bed, where the leaves and stems lie battered by the wind.

**Fritillaria imperalis** is another causality of the winds: the tall stems were whipped back and forward by the swirling winds and despite the strong structure of the stem, especially the ones supporting the flowers, they too were twisted until they snapped over.

The drive for plants to flower is beautifully illustrated here - within days of being felled the flowering end of the kinked stem must be receiving sustenance from the bulb because it has turned upwards to present its flowers

Trilliums that are growing in positions that were more sheltered from the winds are a bit dishevelled but not so badly damaged and the Erythronium hybrid flowers stems also show the wind damage.

These emerging **Paeonia emodii** shoots are completely unaffected by the blizzard that raged through the garden.

I would have thought this carpet of Dicentra growing in deep shade under large trees and Rhododendrons would have been sheltered but the tangle of twisted stems show how far the swirling winds reached.

More damaged flower stems can be seen on this group of **Erythronium revolutum**.

This **Fritillara cirrhosa** flower stem was also a casualty of the wind while the lower growing **Cyclamen cyclamineus** are unscathed.

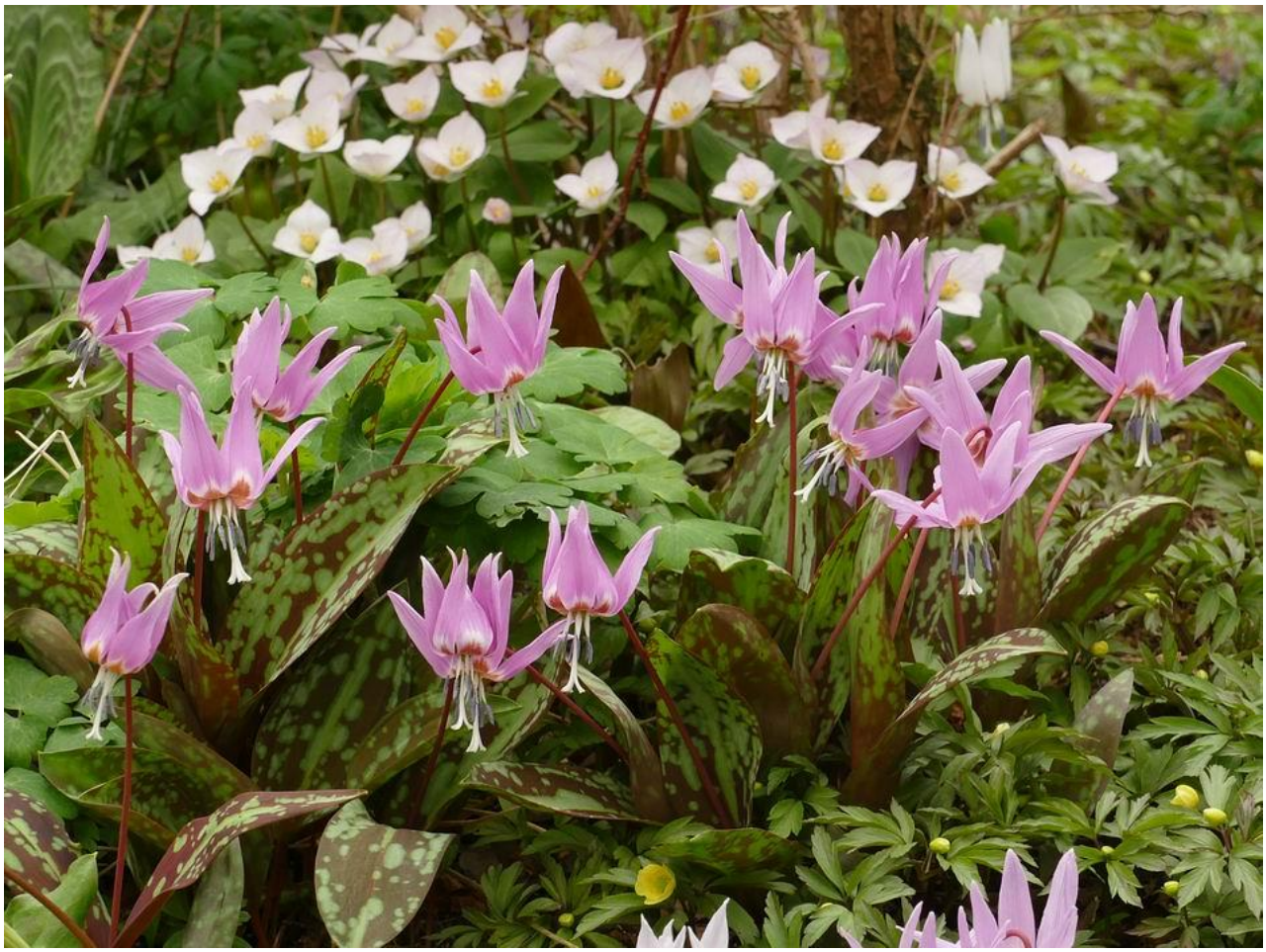
I pictured this group of **Erythronium hendrsonii** before the storm struck sadly it too suffered broken stems.

These **Erythronium sibiricum** were not so advanced in growth so came through without too much damage.

Here are some more **Erythronium sibiricum** and **Erythronium hendersonii** flowers that are flowering now.

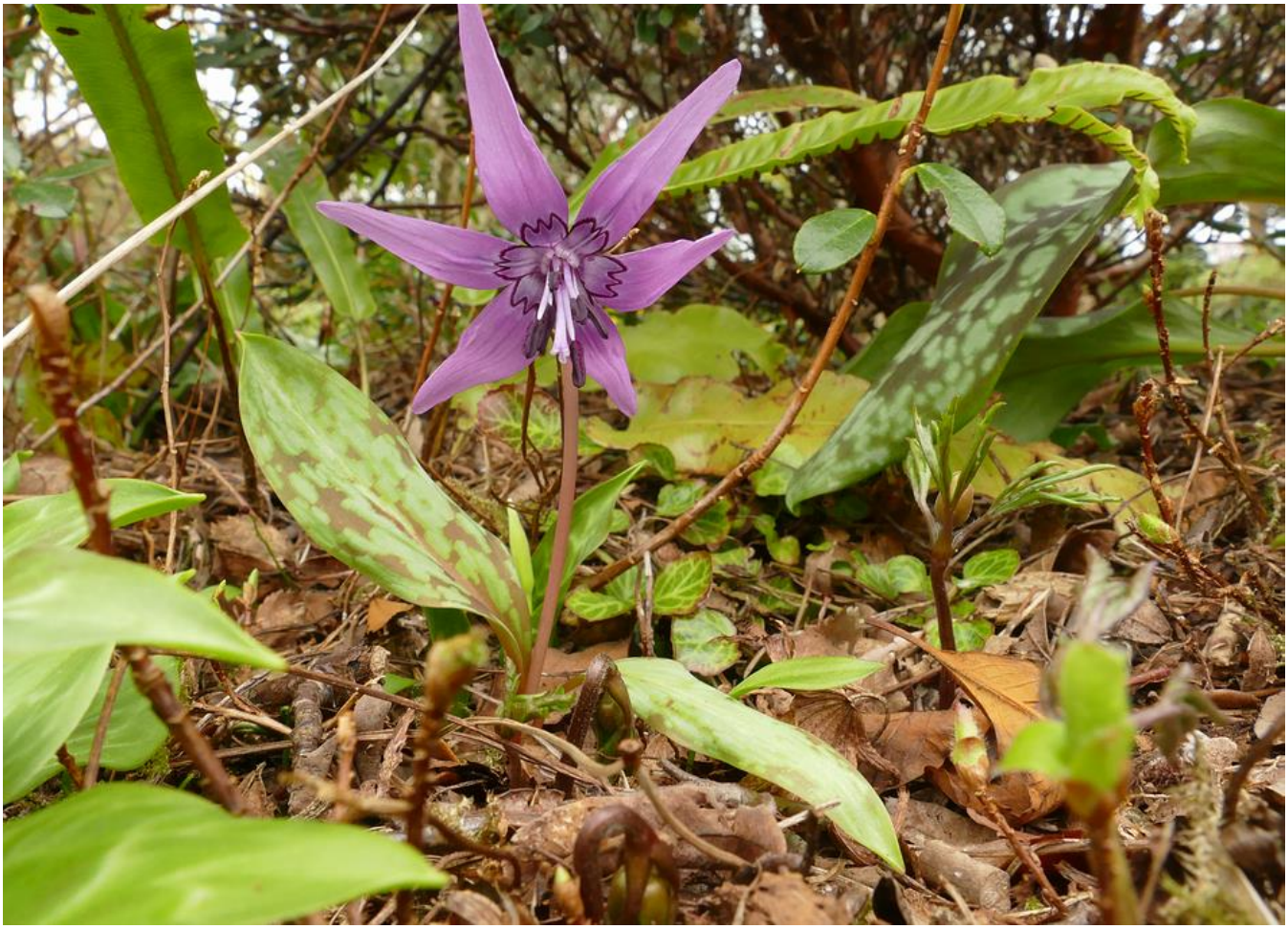
I still refer to these as the **Erythronium sibiricum complex** because I cannot confirm which of the newly named species they might belong with.

The pink flowers are part of the original group of **Erythronium dens-canis** seedlings I planted here and the paler ones in the foreground have self-seeded down the wall sharing the space with Erythronium revolutum seedlings.



The original pink seedlings of **Erythronium dens-canis** with a clump of **(Pseudo)Trillium rivale** growing behind.

Another view across the same raised bed where these Erythronium are encouraged to self-seed.



The first of this seaon's **Erythronium japonicum** flowers are also making an appearance.

By the time I walked round the garden I had been cheered by the many newly emerging flowers that missed the storm and my despondence was wiped away by all the new growths I was finding especially these future generations of self-seeding Erythronium. This reinforces and adds to my belief that raising plants from seed is the best way for many reasons – first because we get a variation of flowers and leaves, but also there can be weeks between the flowering period of different seedlings, showing the wisdom of nature that in spreading the flowering period over several weeks is the best way to ensure that not all the flowers will be destroyed in a single weather event.

I will leave you on a cheerful note with these flowers in the sunshine after the storm……