



SRGC



# Bulb Log Diary



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Welcoming nature





I continue along the theme of welcoming nature into our garden by working in partnership with nature. I am always amused when people suggest that our garden looks to be weed free. My first answer is that weeds are in the mind of the gardener - many a cherished garden plant may be considered to be an invasive weed in some countries. I prefer to call them wild plants and learn to appreciate them. Of course there are some that can spread by seed

and/or stolons to the extent that they become the dominant plant to the exclusion to all others but there are many that just arrive, seed around and grow in harmony with the plants that we choose to introduce. There are some plants in the wild that we would not want in our garden just like there are plants in our gardens that should not be allowed to get into natural habitats indeed most countries have an 'invasive species' list of such plants.



**Digitalis purpurea** rises above the grasses and ferns on the woodland edge of the wild grassland near our home that I featured last week.





This is a wonderfully rich area of farm land that forms part of the 'green belt' on the western edge of Aberdeen –it was bought up many years ago by developers. Up until now the developers have been denied planning permission

so the fields have been abandoned and left to nature and it has been fascinating and educational for me to watch the different habitats forming.

The former fields are crisscrossed with a network of paths trodden by walkers and it has become such a valuable natural park full of wild life that I hope it can remain always like this.

You will see evidence of this type of habitat all though our garden mostly in the way we pack plants in without leaving any bare soil around them.





We can control how much seed the plants in the garden are allowed to shed and so we will cut back the stems of *Digitalis purpurea* as the flowers fade and before they seed; this both reduces the number of seedlings and initiates all the buds in the leaf axils which activate to give us another sequence of flowers - it also makes the plants more perennial – this one has been growing and flowering for five years now. I will



however allow some seed to mature which can be scattered into the back of the shrubby beds but I must admit that the majority of plants resulted from the seeds I miss, shedding and growing in the gravel paths – the seedlings are easily lifted and replanted into suitable areas when they are big enough or in their second year of growth.



This updated picture from the front drive shows the yellow *Digitalis grandiflora* now in its full glory.





I spotted this large-flowered, beautiful form growing in among brambles in another hedgerow that I walk beside and have made a note to go back and collect some seed when it is ripe.

For some reason the stem of this **Lilium martagon** has grown sideways- possibly trying to get out from under the expanding growth of bushes to reach more light however the flowers still open to display their beauty. I dislike using stakes to support the taller plants, I much prefer to let them flop if they want: you will notice that the stem turns skywards again towards the tip.







The early flowering plants and bulbs are mostly short, partly because they flower before the emergence of the carpet of leaves and growth while the later flowering plants need tall stems to push their flowers up so they can display above the mixed foliage. It is well worth spending time looking at the range and variation of the foliage which becomes an increasingly important feature of the garden as the flowering subsides into the summer.



The spring bulb bed is now a forest of Arisaema stems topped off by their attractive whorl of leaves.





**Corydalis mairei** is a subtle plant with small blue flowers that do not stand out as much as many others but when they catch the light along with the red stems and lime green seed pods, they have an appeal. This relatively short-lived plant is one of the many that likes to move around, in this case by seed and rather than staying where it was first planted, it migrated year on year to find new opportunities including among the *Arisaema* stems.



### **Corydalis mairei**

I have aided the spread of *Corydalis mairei* across the garden by scattering its seeds into a range of habitats where it can continue its progress.





I read that if nothing is eating your plants then you are not part of the ecosystem and on that test we are fully absorbed - in fact we welcome nature into our garden. To see so many woodland birds on the garden feeders is both a great joy to us as well as a confirmation that we have indeed created a suitable woodland habitat. Earlier in the year the feeders needed filling a few times a week, now the birds have introduced all their fledglings (some have successfully raised two broods) I need to fill them every day. The birds have eaten their way through 13kg of sunflower hearts in just four weeks.

The garden also provides a wide range of other food sources for the birds from insects and grubs to the seeds of some of the plants we grow.

Earlier in the year we watched the Goldfinches eating the Dandelion seeds.





The Bullfinches have a preference for the seeds of *Geranium robertianum* – this is a plant that many would remove because they consider it to be a weed. I love this plant it seeds around and its delicate growth never competes with any of the other plants - it softens areas around the slabs and troughs and it is such a pleasure to watch the Bullfinches teaching their young to hover and grab the seeds.

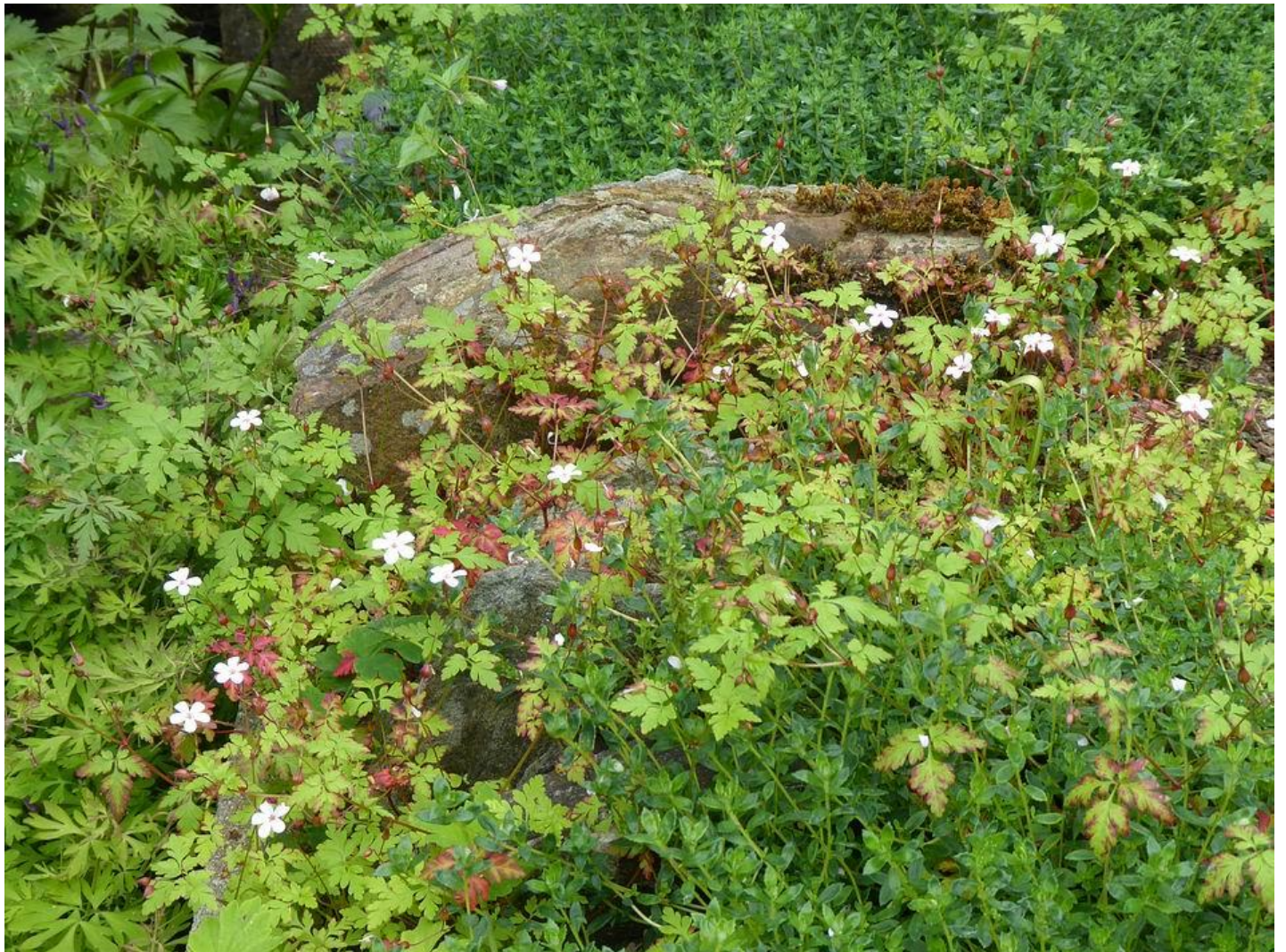


The container grown pine tree offers a habitat for volunteer plants to seed into and become part of the food chain.





The white form of *Geranium robertianum* comes true from seed and also provides a food source for pollinators as well as the seed eaters.



*Geranium robertianum* also provides flowers in the raised slab beds where it grows in perfect harmony while we wait for the *Cyananthus* to start to flower.





**Slab bed**



***Cyananthus microphyllus* , *Geum pulvinaris* and *Geranium robertianum*.**





Hanging over the sides of the slab beds the first **Hypericum reptans** flowers of the year are opening - this Himalayan plant will provide a source of food for pollinators until the winter frosts arrive.







The Erythronium baskets have been replanted and placed back in the plunge.



The early bulbs have retreated underground leaving the straw remains of the leaves on the ground, the last few Meconopsis flowers will also soon be over now it is time for the next wave of flowers, the Roscoea, to emerge.





**Roscoea alpina** and the pink form of *Roscoea scillifolia* seed around in the rock garden bed.



**Roscoea alpina**





***Roscoea scillifolia*** in the foreground with a *Campanula* in the background



***Roscoea cautleyoides***





Summer flowering Campanula such as **Campanula garganica**







This trough is planted with native wild flowers ***Cymbalaria muralis***, ***Prunella vulgaris*** and ***Cochlearia danica*** which are often described as weeds to be eradicated but all have a place in our garden where we can enjoy their beauty and they provide a resource to the wild life.



***Cymbalaria muralis* and *Prunella vulgaris***





**Lilium mackliniae**



**Dactylorhiza**





The scattering of tall Digitalis flowering spikes remind me of the wild areas and enrich the garden habitat that attracts and supports so much bird life.



Allowing nature in enriches our garden and the pleasure that we derive from it.





I will leave you this week with this fine clump of **Lilium pyrenaicum**.....