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Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 11.....17th March 2021



Narcissus cyclamineus



The bulbs of **Narcissus cyclamineus** can be easily raised from seed but the bulbs dislike being out of the ground for any length of time which is one of the reasons why it is not as widely available as other species whose bulbs can be stored and shipped dry during the summer months of dormancy. A question about why a named cultivar of *Narcissus bulbocodium* breaks down into many non-flowering bulbs raises a few interesting points. Bulbs that are not receiving sufficient water and nutrient often react to this stress by breaking down into many small bulbs. Ensuring that your bulbs are well

spaced out and planted deep enough in the first place with the application of a feed with a Potassium supplement around this time of year will also aid flower bud production. Some of the named cultivars that are widely available are selected because they increase quickly not because they are going to flower well in a wide range of growing conditions. In the past we have had a number of such plants including *Narcissus bulbocodium* and a form of *Erythronium dens canis* that made clusters of small nonflowering bulbs every year that never matured to flowering size – our answer was to get rid of them and start growing our own from seed. Populations of bulbs, including *Narcissus*, growing in the wild have been seeding through many generations where by a process of natural selection they have become very adapted to the local weather and habitat of their homeland so we cannot necessarily expect them to grow well in all our different garden conditions. What nature teaches us is to raise the bulbs or plants from seed then by regularly collecting and sowing the seeds through subsequent generations we will end up with plants that are more adapted to your garden conditions using the time tested process of natural selection.



We are constantly collecting and sowing seeds of the **Narcissus cyclamineus** growing in the garden where they have adapted to a wide range of different habitats from a gritty rocky landscape to woodland habitats. Sometimes we just leave them to self sow.



Narcissus cyclamineus

Although the seed set is subject to the vagaries of our weather at flowering time I seek to improve the chances by going around cross pollinating between the flowers with a paint brush.



Many of the Narcissus would not survive growing outside in our garden so we enjoy their flowers all through the winter by growing them in the bulb houses both in pots and the sand beds.



The trumpet daffodils are coming into their flowering season now including the one I knew as *Narcissus perez-chiscanoi* but should now be called ***Narcissus confusus***. We grow this plant in pots in the bulb house as well as in an open frame and as we increase the numbers both by division of the bulb and by seed it can then progress to being planted into the open garden.



We apply the same progression from seed, building up numbers in pots then on to the garden, to many plants including the diminutive ***Narcissus asturiensis*** which is a perfect miniature trumpet daffodil. This potful is waiting to be released into a site suitable to its small size.



This is the shortest of all our forms of **Narcissus asturiensis** growing in a bulb house sand bed.

Narcissus ‘Cedric Morris’ is thought to be a form of *Narcissus asturiensis* and it often comes into flower in December. I have never been able to get this plant to set seed which means the flower never gets the message that it has served its purpose resulting on them having the longest lasting blooms of all the *Narcissus* – they can last for many months. This bulb has to be increased by division of the bulb and as our numbers increased we planted it into a number of differing habitats around the garden but sadly they all dwindled so we had to go into reverse, lifting the few surviving bulbs to grow on in pots again.





The first of what I consider the true **Narcissus cantabricus** have started to flower – this is a petunioid form where the corona opens very wide and flat but beautifully pleated.



Narcissus cantabricus with a more typical funnel shaped corona.



Narcissus cantabricus clusii



The three flowers on the left are **Narcissus hybrids** with a single **Narcissus cantabricus** on the right. I follow Michael Salmon's hypothesis of separating the autumn flowering Narcissus into their own species **Narcissus albidus**.



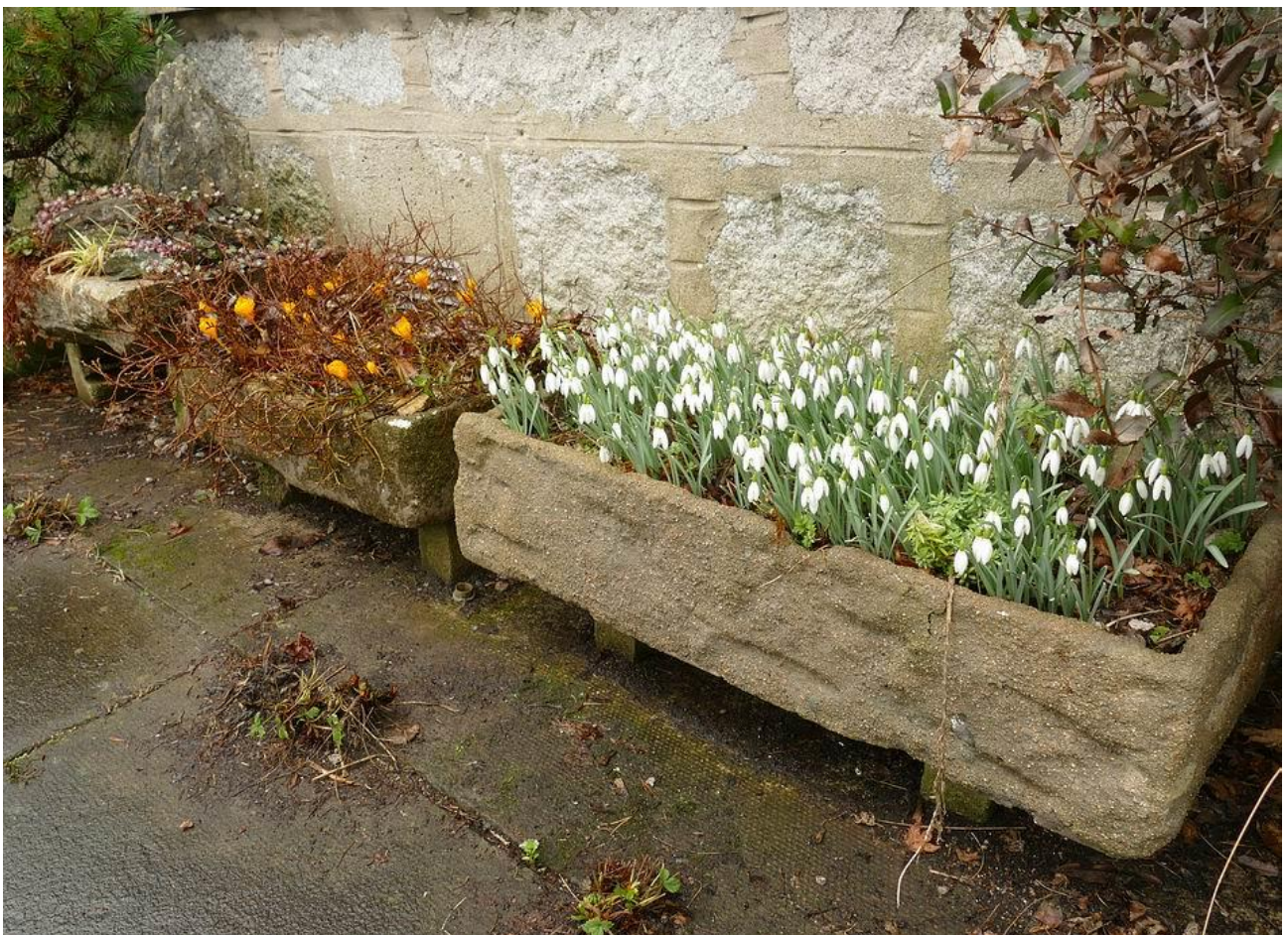
Erythronium caucasicum is always the first of the genus to flower here and as we have raised them all from seed they do not all flower at exactly the same time: these are the earliest forms others will flower some two or three weeks later.



Erythronium caucasicum



The first signs of growth are appearing in the Erythronium plunge beds with a few leaf tips pushing through.



These two troughs share an added interest because they both have interlopers in flower.



This trough is for increasing *Sanguinaria canadensis* but when I first planted it *Galanthus nivalis* got in and over the years it has increased to give a beautiful display of flowers before the *Sanguinaria* comes into growth. Regular readers may remember that over the years I have removed several hundred snowdrops from this trough.



I planted this trough with dwarf willows and as I often refresh and recycle potting compost for the troughs some **Crocus herberti** must have been in the compost and their deep yellow flowers make an attractive display appearing through the twisted branches of the willows.



There is also a lot of colour in this outside frame where many bulbs are waiting to progress into the garden.



Among the bulbs are some very interesting selections of *Galanthus nivalis* that we were kindly sent a few years ago as small bulbs now they are revealing their beauty. Left, *Galanthus* 'Little Artist' and right 'Fairy Tail'.



Galanthus 'Fairy Tail'



Galanthus 'Trust'



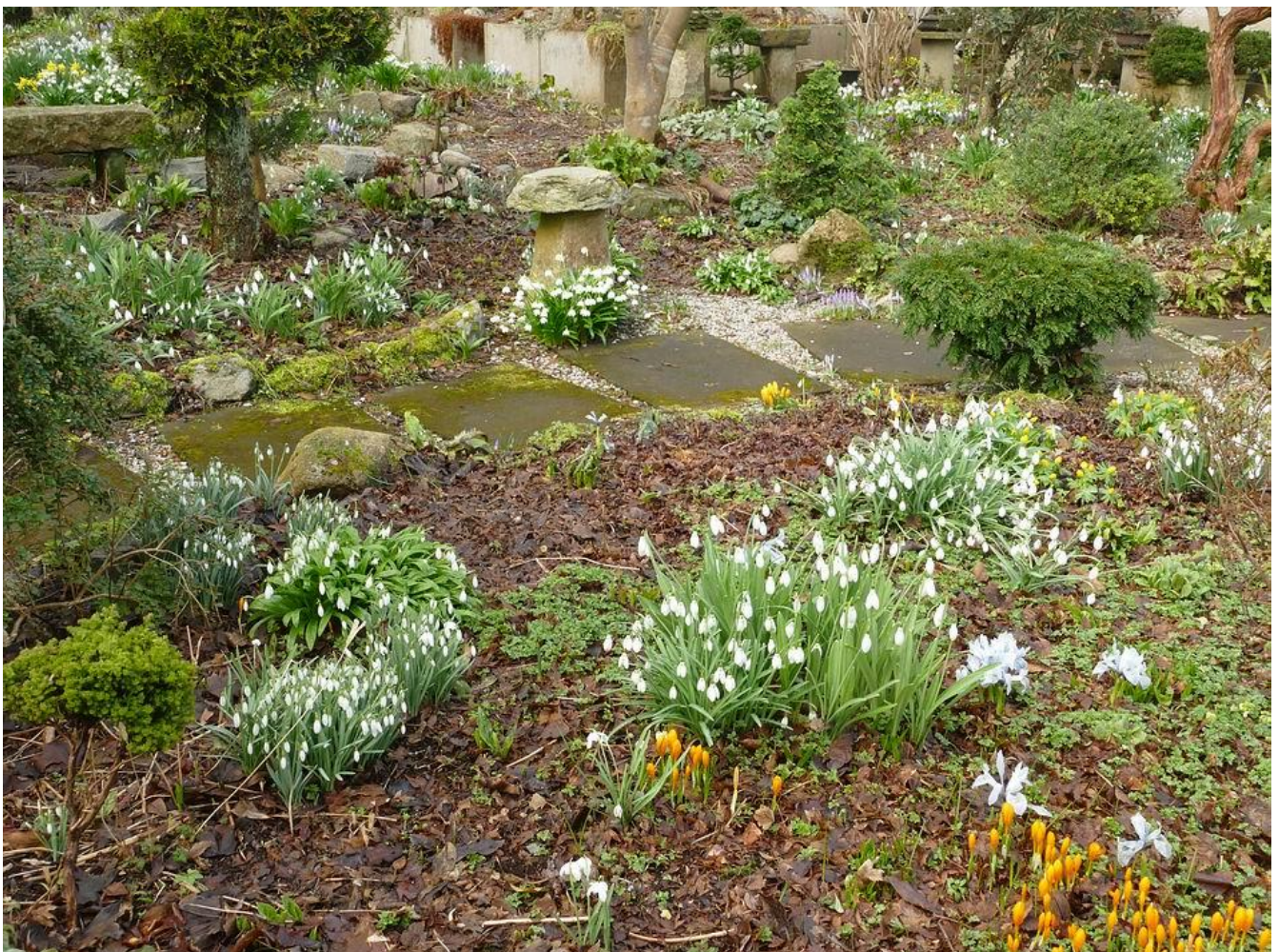
***Galanthus woronowii* 'Elizabeth Harrison'**



Once they go into the garden their labels are left behind and we just enjoy the variations.



Snowdrop



The enjoyment is seeing the white flowers spreading out across the garden as well as getting down and studying such variations that they might possess.



Galanthus and Leucojum all contribute to the white wave that sweeps across the garden every year.





It is mostly **Leucojum vernum var carpathicum** seeding around in this bed providing early interest before the Trillium and Erythronium get going.





Early flowering bulbs





The ideal time to lift any bulb is when there is no root growth to disturb or damage. For most bulbs that is when they go down for a summer rest however if necessary you can move them in full growth - provided you can do it with minimal damage to the roots. The reason I am planting this pot of bulbs out now is I can see the spaces in the beds where I want to plant them and I can get reasonable access. By the time these bulbs would be dormant there will be extensive growth in the beds and around the area where I am placing them and planting the bulbs then would cause much damage to those other plants so it a case of doing the job when I will cause least damage.



Two weeks ago I applied a small amount of fertiliser around the emerging shoots of *Fritillaria imperialis* which has provided the plant with food to put on the growth without having to use up the reserves stored in the bulb.



More flowers appear in the sand beds and I love the inside/outside view where I can also see the waves of colour spreading over the garden.



Crocus herberti



Crocus tomasinianus



I will leave you with an image of Crocus growing through the remains of some of last year's plants plus a link to [Bulb Log 4619](#) which is a special issue describing my methods of raising bulbs from seed.....