



BULB LOG 40.....6th October 2021



Crocus



A few weeks ago I wrote about my plant envy regarding Cyclamen growing so well in other people's gardens and I also get envious when I see stands of **Sternbergia lutea** flowering and increasing when simply planted out in their gardens - not so here. I have grown Sternbergia species in pots for years and while the number of bulbs has increased greatly I get very few flowers. Several times I have tried planting bulbs outside but in our cool wet garden conditions they dwindle away within a few years. At least for now I can enjoy the warmth of the bulb house while I watch the hoverflies swarming around these golden yellow flowers.



The most consistent results in regard to flowering Sternbergia has come from the ones I planted into the sand beds. Once they established themselves in the sand they have grown to produce some flowers each year. Gardeners have to remain positive and I am hopeful that as they settle in I will get ever more flowers.

Now the flowers of the *Sternbergia* have faded the bulbs a vigorous growth of leaves has emerged, perhaps encouraged by the addition of a small pinch of extra fertiliser I scattered around them – later I will add a potassium supplement.



Bulb House Sand Bed



Sternbergia sicula

In the same sand bed there is a single *Sternbergia sicula* flower and I want you to also admire the strong shadow it has cast projecting a perfect dark image of itself onto the warm sand.



When I made the sand bed I sprinkled in a mixture of Cyclamen seeds and this lovely dark form was one of the first to reach flowering size with additional flowers appearing each subsequent year.



Rosettes of *Scilla lingulata* leaves push up mounds in the sand that crack open under the pressure as the growth breaks through the sand.



There has been significant leaf growth since I applied the first water storm on 1st September now it is time for the October storm.



The October storm is a repeat of the September one, when I take the time to ensure that I apply enough water to completely soak the sand all the way through.



While checking I found the first of this year's **Narcissus buds**, above, poking through the sand also fat **Crocus buds**, below, full of promise.

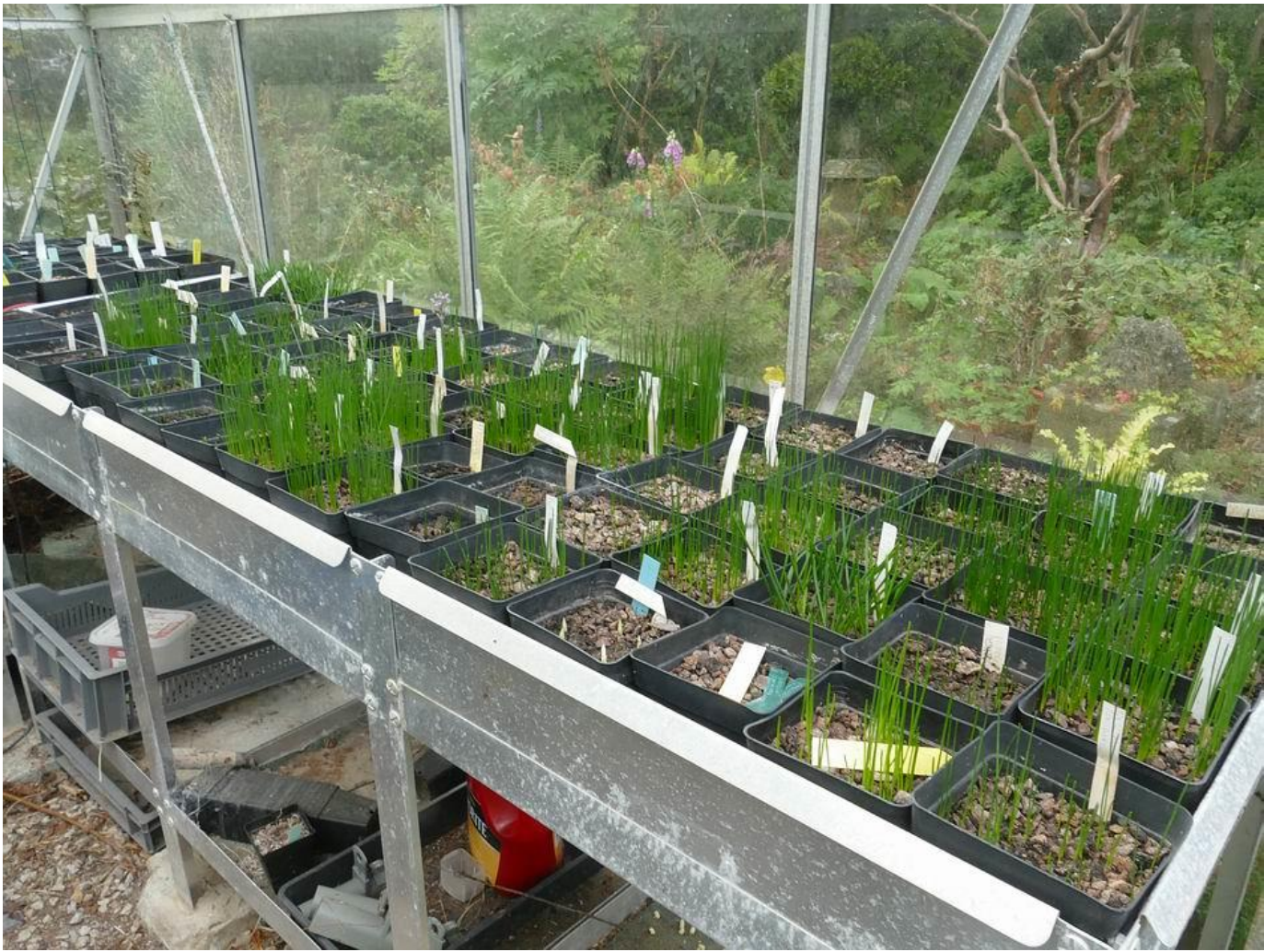




Sternbergia sicula

This *Sternbergia sicula* growing in another of the sand beds is proving to be the most reliable flowering form to date. I am encouraged by this success and will transfer more from the pots into the sand.





All the pots and the sand beds have had their October storm and from now on through the autumn and winter I will water by judgement. The pots get watered in proportion to the amount of leaf growth and while it is still a learning experience when to water the sand beds, the rule I follow is that now the bulbs are growing they must not dry out and those with a lot of leaf growth to support need more water than those with little or no growth, so some localised watering is appropriate.



I will soon have to switch off the outside water for the winter after which all the watering will be done by can and each time I fill a can for the sand beds I will add a dilute 1/3 strength tomato fertiliser.



Rubus fruticosus, known as Brambles in Scotland, is an aggregate of around 300 ‘micro species’ that vary in the shape of the leaves, prickles, flower colour, growth pattern and, most importantly to me, taste. The flavour of each Bramble can vary from bush to bush even when they are growing intermixed so I like to sample before I pick.

The sensations I experienced while picking Brambles this week took me right back to my childhood.



With the ‘ank – ank’ of Geese flying overhead, the sharp sweet taste of the fruits on my tongue, the jaggling on my legs when, reaching out for fruits, I push against the prickles, then the unpleasant irritation caused to my skin when I brushed against a Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), which always seem to grow alongside the brambles, sent me rushing to find a Docken leaf (*Rumex obtusifolius*) which fortunately can always be found alongside Nettles. Rubbing the Docken juices from a

crushed leaf on the sting, a natural antidote that I learned as a boy, brings immediate relief.



The berries on a Sorbus with a background of the moon in a clear blue morning sky are typical signs of autumn.



Although fungi can appear anytime they are most plentiful in the cool moist autumn conditions when they are anticipating that the leaf fall will provide a plentiful resource to nourish the mycelium.



I do not need to walk far to be reminded of the falling leaves: my progress is slowed as my gaze is constantly fixed to the ground enjoying the random and often attractive arrangements that the autumn debris creates on the ground.



Not all will enjoy this annual bounty which they only see as a nuisance to be scooped up and thrown in the bin - little do they realise that these leaves can be turned into a valuable natural soil conditioner which will be much better for their garden than the proprietary bags they will later buy at the supermarket or garden centre.



Betula utilis

With the exception of *Acer platanoides* 'Crimson King' all the trees in our garden have relatively small leaves which break down quickly to form a workable leaf mould.



Acer palmatum



Colchicum speciosum album

Now to the autumn flowering bulbs which continue to bloom such as Colchicum speciosum in two forms .



Colchicum speciosum



Crocus serotinus* subsp. *salzmannii



***Crocus serotinus* subsp. *salzmannii* adds its beauty to the cobble bed**

Some weeks after the first flowers of the Crocus in the paving have collapsed yet more flower buds push their way up – to date I have counted 35 flowers – it does not seem to be many years since the first single flower appeared.



The floral display in the new bed beside the pond is greatly enhanced by the emergence of more **Crocus banaticus** and **Crocus vallicola**



The natural autumnal invasion of *Crocus nudiflorus*, *speciosus* and *Colchicum* flowers in this plunge bed is giving us great pleasure and the next few pictures reminds us that the bed also looks lovely in the spring when *Crocus*, *Erythronium* and *Fritillaria* are among the subjects that are in flower,



The spring
flowering
**Crocus
pelistericus.**



Erythronium dens-canis - Spring



Erythronium hendersonii in the spring growing in the same spot (note the edge of the shed) as the Crocus and Colchicum.



Flowering right now are colour forms of **Crocus nudiflorus**, **Crocus speciosus** and a dark flowered **Colchicum**.



Jumping back to spring: as the **Erythronium** flowers faded, **Fritillaria pyrenaica** took to the stage after which the flowering subsided over the summer before the explosion of **Crocus** flowers appeared see below.



Autumn flowering Crocus time in the Erythronium bed.



Colchicum

I have no idea how this lovely dark Colchicum got into this bed - it started out as a very small plant so perhaps it was from stray seeds, I will never know, but the one on the right has four lovely dark tubed flowers.



In our low autumn light and poor weather conditions **Crocus speciosus** in particular can sometimes grow too tall like this group that have flopped over before the flowers got a chance to open but all is not lost.



You can pick the flowers and take them inside, place them in a jar of water, where they will open in the warmth then you can enjoy their beauty and lovely scent for a few days as shown on this week's cover and in the following picture.



Since the upgrade of the SRGC.net website, which included moving server, some of the links on the forum or other media may be broken – if you find that just navigate to the new site, SRGC.net, where you will find all the information is accessible there - here is the new link to my book [‘Erythroniums in Cultivation’](#).....