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Bulb Log Diary

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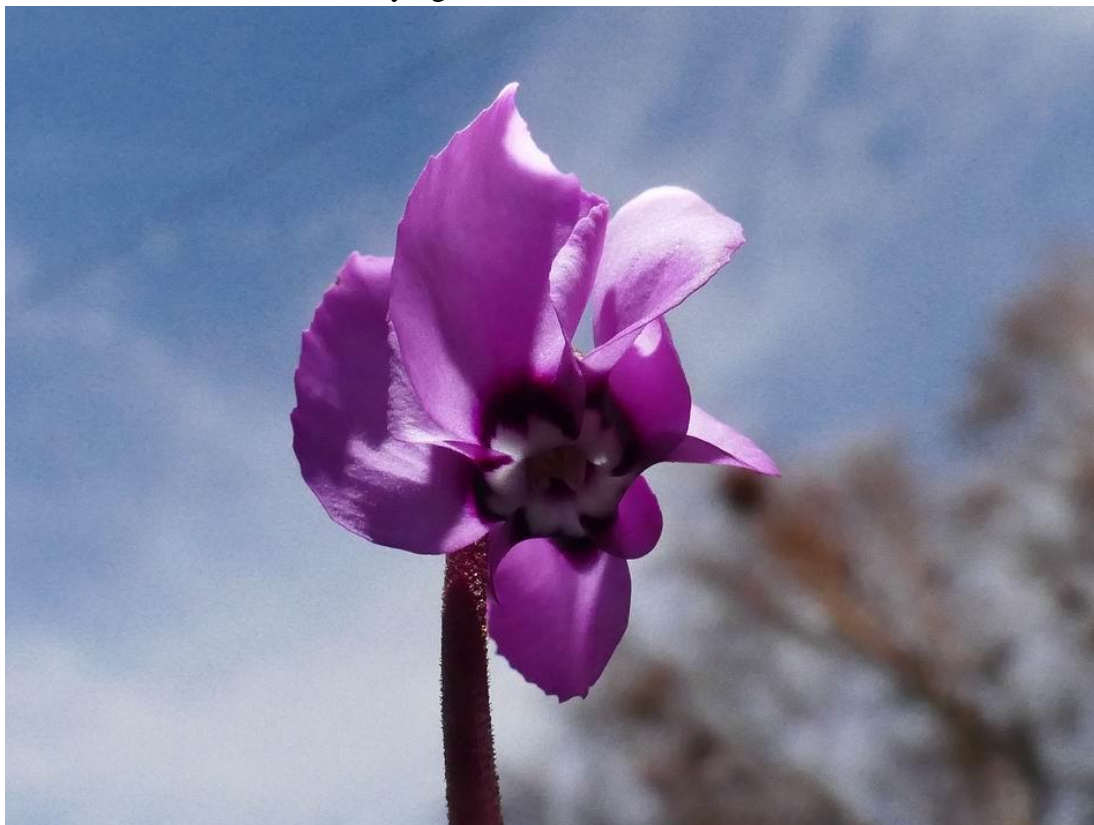
BULB LOG 51.....22nd December 2021



Crocus laevigatus



Nature always finds a way to put this gardener in his place. Last week I wrote that I didn't think our temperatures would rise enough outside to enable these **Crocus laevigatus** flowers to open but no sooner had I loaded the Log than a high pressure system moved over us bringing a number of unusually bright and mild days for the mid-winter. I really do not mind being caught out like this because the good weather allowed me to enjoy the flowers and to get on with some of the winter tidying.



I had been watching the first of the **Cyclamen coum** flowers slowly rising up as the stem, that has for some weeks been pushing the bud along the ground, rose up to present the flower to the sunshine. Actually the sun is too low in the sky to light the flower directly so getting the picture I wanted involved reflecting the light from the small built-in flash on my camera off a mirror to the subject which being so close would have been in the shadow of the camera lens.



Cyclamen coum



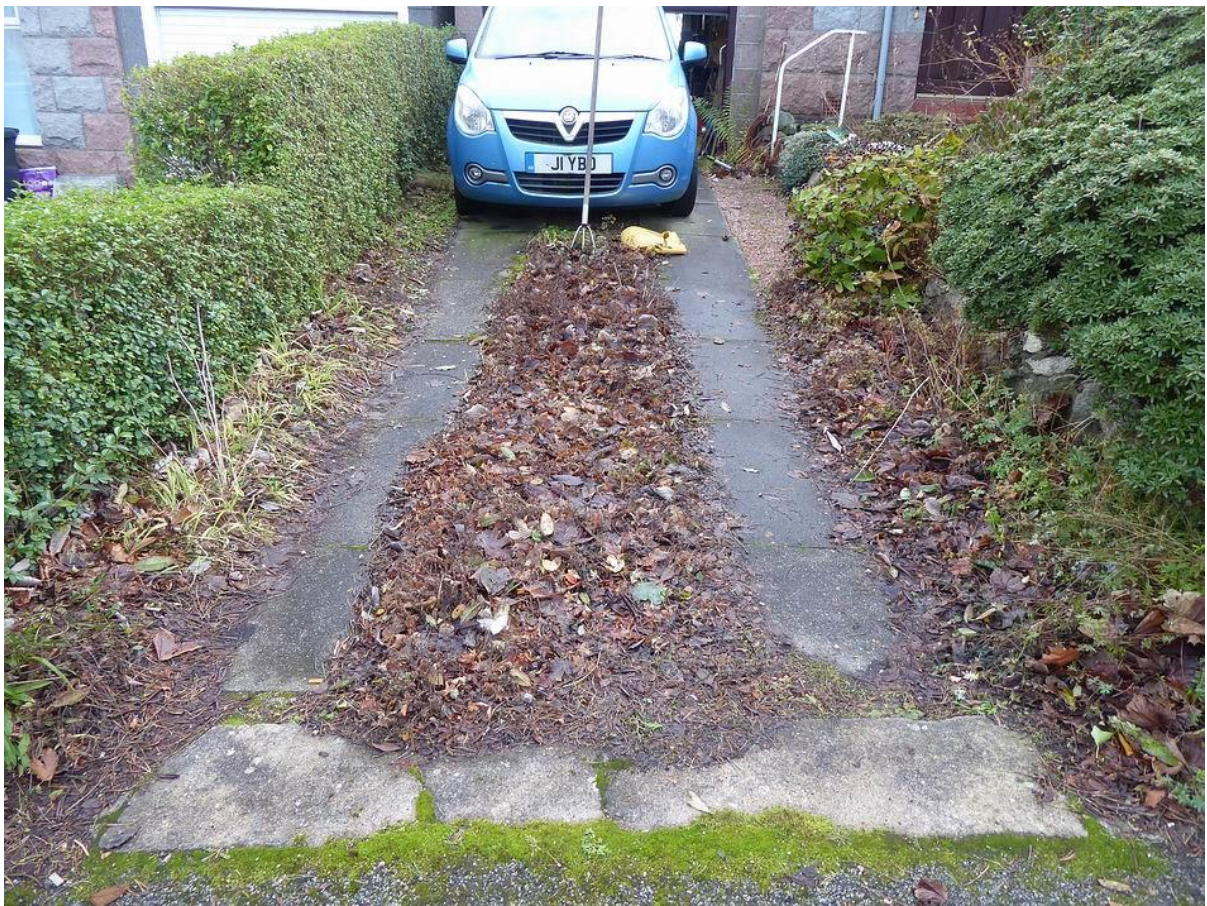
I tugged at an old brown leaf of **Paeonia emodi** that was in my way as I was taking pictures of some Snowdrops and accidentally broke off this lovely healthy nose complete with two buds and some roots. The plant is old so the rhizomes spread out quite a long way from the original planting spot making them susceptible to being broken if I am careless. All is not lost however because there are plenty more noses on the original plant and I know that this broken bit will establish well now I have planted it in a new spot. I know that because this is not the first time I have done this and such accidents can be a great way to learn how to propagate plants and as long as the ground is not frozen this seems to be a good time of year to take such divisions.



While checking and removing some fallen leaves in the frame of pots I spotted the 'U' shaped green shoots of **Eranthis pinnatifida** among the weeds and liverworts. Below the bend of the stem you can see the leaves and flowers being pulled up through the soil, not protected in a bud but almost fully formed- -they will continue to slowly enlarge as they surface, turning upwards to display their beautiful flowers though the coming weeks and months. This is not early, we are accustomed to seeing the new season's growth of Eranthis pinnatifida in December with the first flowers displaying in January and February depending on the weather.



I found some other shoots while tidying - these are of **Dactylorhiza** that have self-seeded into the driveway.



The fine weather and dry conditions have allowed me to give the driveway plantings their annual tidy up – I can't do it too early because I need to wait until the plants, especially the *Geranium sanguineum* have died back.



By this time the remains of old growth has become brittle breaking off easily as I rake away leaves that have blown in from the road. Our wee car sits there most of the time shading out the light so nothing grows underneath her.



Because cars don't use the other driveway very much we can have some slightly taller plants and so there is more tidying to do here.



By this time of year the driveway does look in need of a good tidy up.

Apart from pulling out the odd unwanted plant that seeds in, the driveways require relatively little work through the year until now when I need to spend some hours clearing away the remains of the old growth to make way for the new season. The process is the same starting out with a three pronged rake then getting down with some sheers and a trowel to crop back any old growth and remove any unsuitable or unwanted plants that have seeded in.



If you remember what I wrote a few weeks ago about how moss helps to form a layer of soil then here is another illustration. I lifted some Bowles Golden Grass which came away with its roots holding the new formed soil layer leaving just clean gravel below.



This mat is even more illustrative of this process but before I got rid of the unwanted grass I spotted some seedling bulbs needing rescued.



The bulb seedlings included first year Erythroniums.



While weeding out unwanted plants I disturbed these mature Crocus corms along with the bunch of seedlings shown below all of which were quickly replanted.



Young Crocus corms awaiting replanting.



Now the first stage of tidying is completed the wind can dry the ground can out a bit which will let me do the final tidying – I still have to do a bit more clearing down the left hand side which merges into the garden. If you want to see more from through the year I will add a link to the Driveway special edition of the Bulb Log at the end.



Even in mid-winter we can still have flowers in the garden and I will share some of them now starting with the first few clumps of **Galanthus** to flowers for us.



Galanthus





The Hoop petticoat Narcissus continue flowering in the bulb houses.





Narcissus





As well as the frost and ice there are plenty of fat flower buds on **Rhododendron yakushimanum** this year.



I have admired this grouping of trees that I pass on my walks but have not been able to capture the image to my satisfaction until this morning when a freezing mist and strong backlighting from the rising sun isolated them from the background.



To my right, from the above picture, a pair of Roe Deer were watching me but turned away as I focused on them.

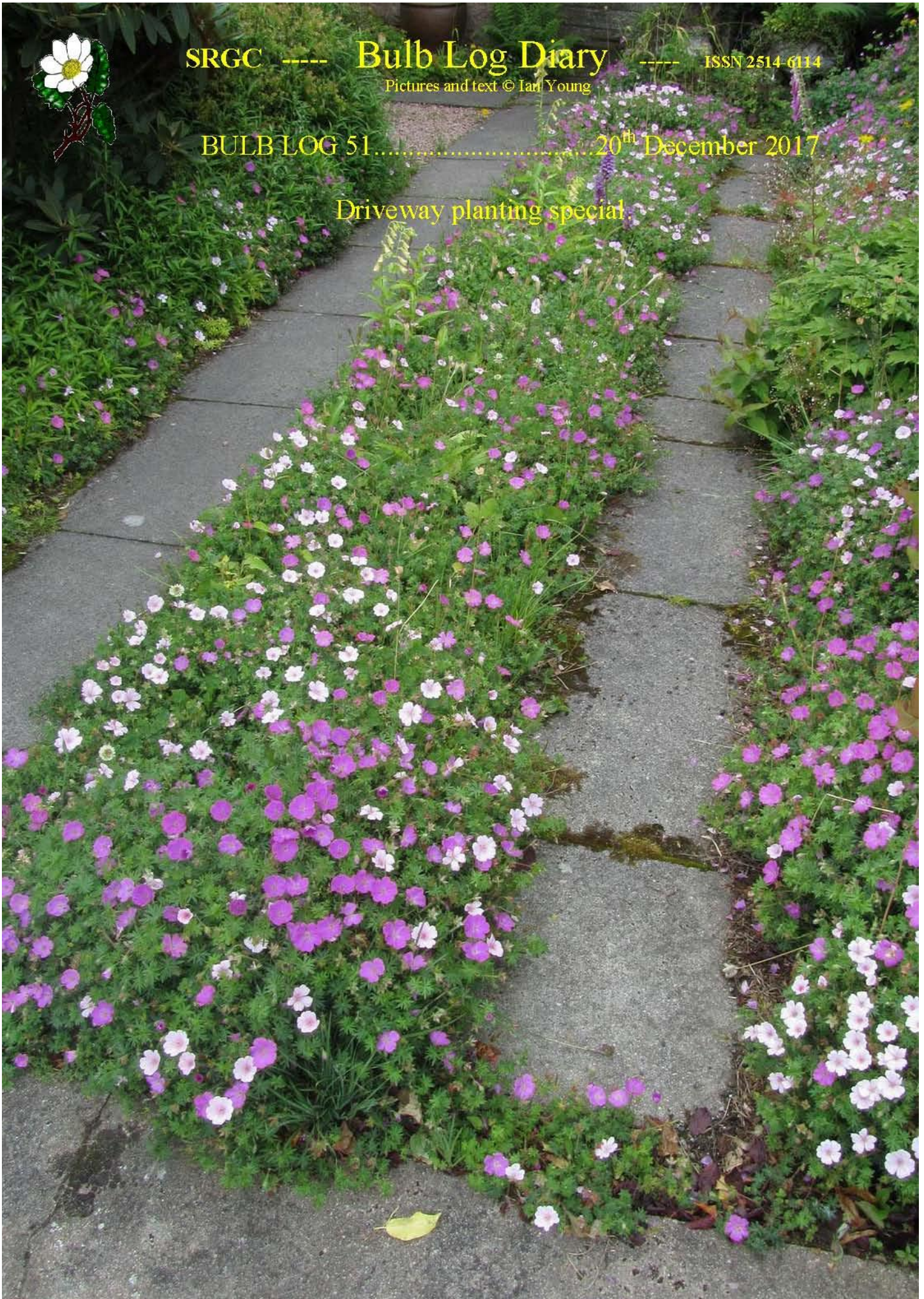


From the warmth of my armchair I am able to watch the woodpigeons enjoying a snack of berries in the dying rays of the setting midwinter sun.

If you want to see the Driveways flowering through the year click on the picture below to go to the Bulb Log Special.



Driveway planting special



Click on the picture.....