



SRGC

# Bulb Log Diary

ISSN 2514-0114

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BULB LOG 25.....22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022





All through the year the garden delivers beauty and inspiration which often features on the Bulb Log covers but some moments are so special, almost magical, that they demand to be shared and this yellow carpet which appeared overnight is one of those. Around half the Laburnum flowers had dropped from the tree so as I approached I was greeted by a golden yellow blanket covering the ground and for a moment I felt like Jason discovering the Golden Fleece.



Even bright green Duckweed covering the pond was spotted by the yellow Laburnum flowers.



As I was drinking in this beautiful vision of nature I reflected on how this yellow carpet had temporarily changed how I viewed the paths and slabs surrounding the pond. They had changed from the grey hard surfaces into beautiful delicate yellow features that I was now reluctant to walk over less I destroyed the magic.



This effect is a fleeting beauty as the fallen flowers will soon turn brown and instead of lovely, will look untidy.

Untidy, messy, unkempt are words that some may apply to our type of garden and was the subject of a conversation I had on one of my walks around the neighbourhood. I was walking a short distance with a friend and as we past this scene he complained about the untidy mess of the 'weeds' as he called them. They are wild flowers, part of nature, what harm are they doing to any one, was my response.



I had been enjoying watching these **Sonchus, Sowthistles** growing in the cracks between the pavements and walls. I pointed out the difference between the prickly one on the left and the smooth one on the right along with the benefit they bring to insects but he was not convinced.

He would prefer a 'tidy' hard landscape of concrete, tar and stone.



I rather like the wild plants growing along the edges of the roads - they make walking round the area more interesting. Like this group of *Matricaria discoidea* (Pineapple Weed) growing in a space, where they should have planted a tree, bringing life greenery and flowers which are doing no harm to anyone.



Another of the many wild flowers growing crevice style at the edge of the pavement is ***Medicago lupulina* (Black Meddick)**.



People have different attitudes to gardens and public spaces. Some expect the communal grass areas to be constantly cut short with no flowers. Others like me think the grass should be allowed to grow, allowing the wild flowers to bloom and set seed, before it is cut. In some areas this is occasionally happening, often more as a cost cutting exercise than an environmental one, but at long last some councils are starting to accept a greener approach.



Above is a garden that many, including my friend, would find untidy but I love the wild nature of it. This style of garden provides a range of habitats and food sources for the wild life. I think it looks beautiful with **Limnanthes douglasii** in full flower - the same colours being picked up by the two Pieris bushes beyond a small patch of grass which has been left to grow so it is also full of flowers.

Undoubtedly this looks scruffy to some but is a perfect example of accepting nature into our gardens. I have included a

picture I took of the same garden in March when a mass of Crocus were flowering including in the grass.



Now this is the kind of garden my friend admires, neat and tidy, with lines of annuals spaced equally along the border surrounded by bare impoverished soils.

If you want to know how not to build a rock garden there is a perfect example in the same garden. An assortment of rocks is spaced out unimaginatively along the narrow border. While they are difficult to see in this picture there are some small plants planted equally spaced between the rocks.



Every time I walk past I get the urge to re-arrange the rocks into groups so that they relate to each other and form something more natural looking with more suitable planting pockets.



On my way home I passed this trailer of rubble and thought what a great rock garden I could build with this.



If you need ideas or advice check out [The Crevice Garden book](#) on how to make the perfect home for plants from rocky places by Kenton Seth and Paul Spriggs.



How good a rock garden looks depends on how you place the rocks. Laying the first rock is often easy but after that you have to consider how each successive rock relates aesthetically and horticulturally to those already laid paying particular attention to the negative spaces between them.



Every time I pass this random grouping of four large rocks in a local wood I stop to appreciate the positive and negative shapes this arrangement forms – we can learn a lot from observing random groups of rocks in nature. .



Our garden is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the rows of annuals in bare soil shown on page 7. We go for a very natural style of planting where plants grow with and among each other so there are no signs of the bare ground except in winter.



We are also happy to assess nature's gifts of plants that arrive mysteriously in the garden, many of which my friend would describe as weeds.

This beautiful Ranunculus appeared in the front garden some years ago and we are happy to have it around.



***Pseudofumaria lutea***



Plants seeding around among some of the troughs soften the landscape providing food for a constant stream of bees and other insects. We dead head most the *Papaver cambricum* which both reduces the amount of seed shed and encourages secondary flowers into growth.



It is not to everyone's taste but we like the random mass planting jungle effect of the garden at this time of year—in the foreground a forrest of **Arisaema ciliatum var liubaense** becomes the next wave of growth in this bed.



**Arisaema ciliatum var liubaense**



*Arisaema ciliatum* var. *liubaense*



Many of the plants flowering in the garden at this time of year, such as *Aquilegia*, *Aconitium*, *Digitalis*, *Papaver* etc, have seeded themselves.



***Lilium pyrenicum***





Digitalis

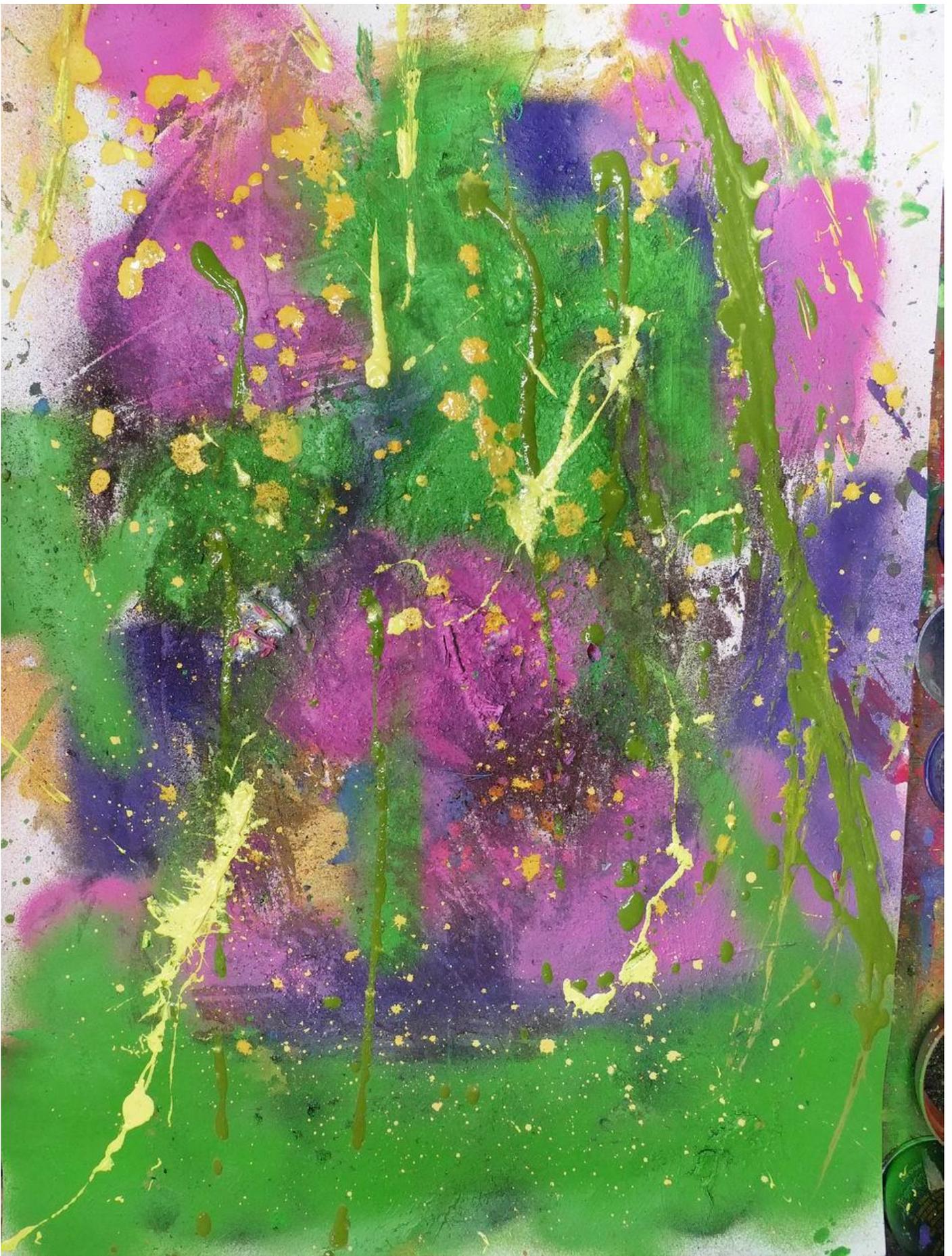




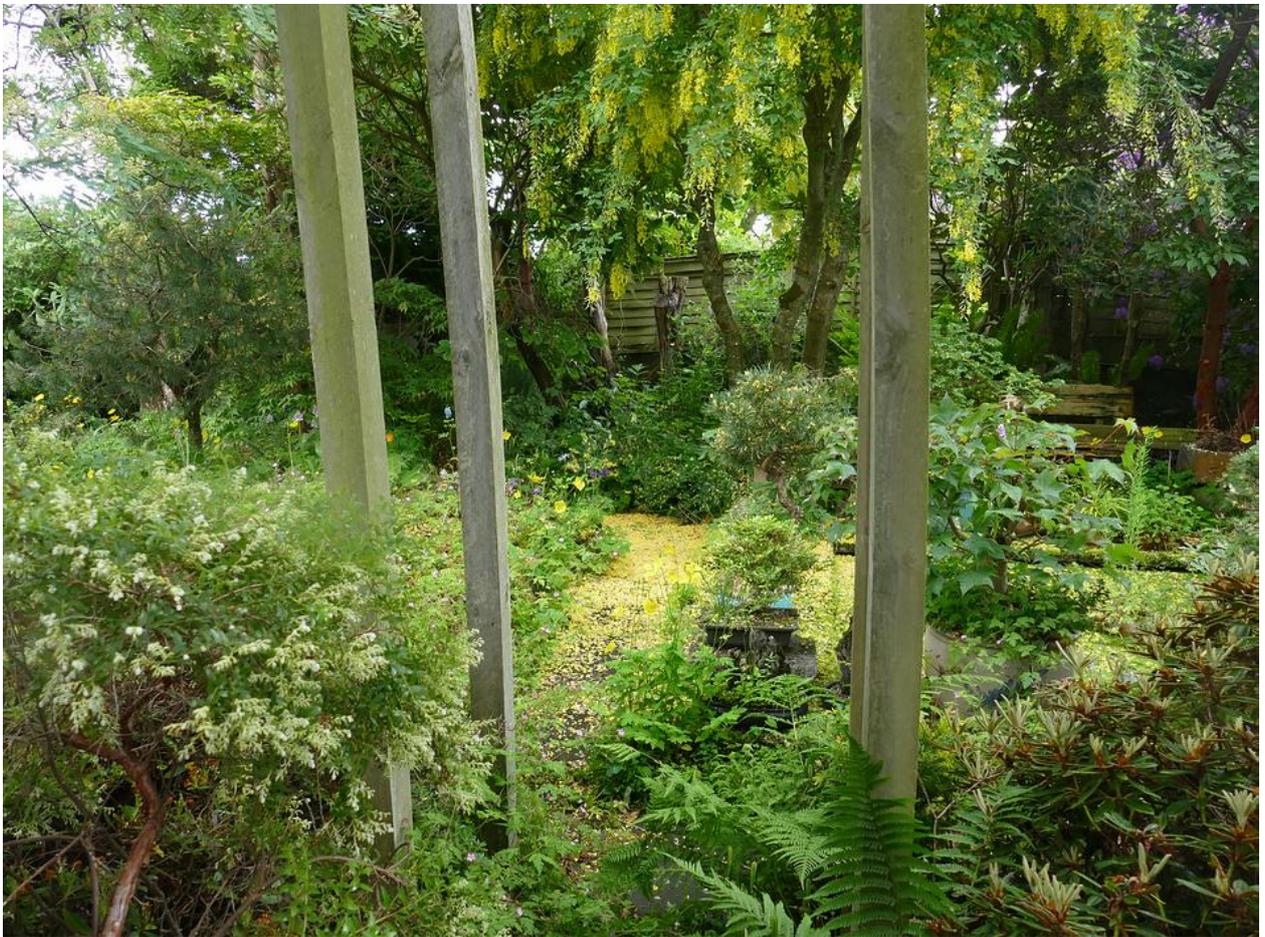
I am always trying to capture an impression of the many beautiful, subtle effects that these random plantings create.



In addition to being a kitchen herb the flowers of common Chives, *Allium schoenoprasum*, add colourful highlights to the garden.



As well as trying to capture the garden in photographs, which capture a single moment, I also work on paintings. Painting is just like gardening - in both I try to create the atmosphere by building up multiple layers of shape colour and texture. This painting is at an early stage and just like creating a garden bed each new mark forms a relationship with those already there - starting with the ground I build layers of texture and colour before I will add a final addition of some structure to hopefully pull it all together. Paintings are more like gardens than photographs in the sense that they are not stuck in a single moment they change with time so much of what you see at this stage of the painting may be covered by future layers just like the garden beds change as different waves of flowers emerge.



I must come back to the yellow carpet of fallen Laburnum flowers which for a short time has become such a colourful feature in the garden.



*Iris sibirica*



Gardening is an art and, if we allow it in, Nature can be the greatest artist providing such beautiful flowers and effects. The yellow carpet which will soon lose its colour turning brown into what even I would consider a mess on the paths to be cleared away leaving just the memory and pictures until it happens again next year.

Until then nature and the garden will deliver so many more delights.....