



BULB LOG 35.....31st August 2022



Crocus scharojanii flavus



In Last week's Bulb Log I was removing the old growths from some of the beds preparing for the emergence of the autumn flowers. I was just in time because this week the flowers of **Crocus scharojanii flavus** appeared through the pine needle mulch.



While I was clearing this bed last week I discovered the first of the seasons **Crocus nudiflorus** flowers in bud since then it has opened and been joined by some others.



I never cease to be amazed by the speed that bulbs appear and flower which is illustrated well with the *Crocus nudiflorus* shoots (above). I first showed them last week compared with the picture below taken the very next day.



Crocus nudiflorus in full flower.



The Crocus nudiflorus flowers opened in the warm air and were visited by many insects, mostly hover flies. There are always more pollinating insects around the garden in the late summer warmth than there are when the spring species flower – perhaps that is what drove the evolution of the autumn flowering species. In the early part of a year it is often too cold and damp in our garden for insects to fly or even for the crocus flowers to open, which accounts for the fact that we regularly get seed forming on the autumn flowering species but rarely on the spring ones. When the flowers are pollinated the pollen grows down the long floral tube, which pushes up through the ground, to the

ovary which stays underground nestled on top of the corm all through the winter until the stem eventually extends pushing the ripe seed pod above ground to open at the same time as their spring flowering relatives.

The floral tube is delicate and easily damaged so the flowers do not last for long as shown by the same flowers pictured after another day.

The fact that the flowers may not last long should not put you off growing them because most corms will produce at least a second flowering and these early ones herald a



succession of Crocus flowers that will gain momentum delivering decoration through the next few months at least.



The first of the autumn flowering Colchicum are also making their annual appearance.



The plants and grasses in nature are looking very autumnal as they are setting seed.



The Brambles in my favourite foraging area are ripening quickly.



It does not take me long to gather a small tray of Brambles for the day.



Over the last six weeks I have foraged wild raspberries from this area and I found the last few of this year's harvest to top off my tray. The fruits have evolved to be eaten by birds and animals which in turn help disperse the seeds over a wider area and there are plenty of seeds around. We should welcome the annual harvest of seeds, not just for the tasty treats some of the berries offer but for the future generations of plants that these tiny capsules hold.



These large colourful rosehips are part of a planting around the edge of a recent housing estate.

I find seeds to be at least as fascinating as the flowers if not more so.

The majority of our garden plants are included in the angiosperm clade – commonly known as the flowering plants. The name is derived from the Greek words angeion ('container, vessel') and sperma ('seed'), referring to those plants that produce their seeds enclosed within a fruit.

The huge amount of DNA variation in modern flowering plants suggests that the angiosperms must

have evolved in the late Triassic or early Jurassic however the earliest known fossil records found so far are of pollen from the early Cretaceous 140 – 130 million years ago.



There are pink and white flowered roses in the planting and while the main flowering was some time ago there are some blooming now on the same bushes as the ripe hips.



It is a good year for berries and fruits as can be seen by the amount of nuts forming on this Beech tree, **Fagus sylvatica**.



The berries on the garden **Sorbus aucuparia (Rowan)** are always the first to ripen and they will also be the first to be eaten by the birds.



Sorbus aucuparia



The fruits on the **Hypericum androsaemum** are starting to turn black as they ripen.



Paeonia seeds also put on a dramatic display as they burst out from their protective capsule.



While the fruits of some plants entice birds, insects and other animals to help disperse their seeds other plants such as the *Digitalis* above rely on the forces of nature such as wind and gravity.



Digitalis and *Linaria* have evolved a similar strategy where they rely on numbers producing thousands of seed in the hope that a few will succeed.



Many plants, such as this **Mutisia**, have evolved complex structures allowing the seeds to fly off in the wind with the seed often touching down and germinating far away from the parent.



Close inspection of the seeds using a camera or magnifying glass will take you further into the fascinating world of plants.



Some seeds are shed soon after the flowers fade such as these still green **Roscoea** seeds falling away as the capsule opens and disintegrates.



In contrast once these **Cyclamen hederifolium** flowers have been fertilised the stem coils round the seed capsule drawing it down to sit on top of the corm for around ten months before the capsule releases the seeds.



Each of the **Scabiosa columbaria** seeds has a cluster of bristles which have a hooked end hoping to latch on to anything that may be passing - a number of plants have burrs some of which are more efficient than others.



Among the most effective of the hooked seeds has to be those of **Galium aparine** where it is not just the seeds but the whole plant that is covered in tiny hooks – making nature the inventor of Velcro.



I should mention a few of the Conifers which are gymnosperms - above **Taxus baccata**, the common Yew, showing the red aril, an open structure surrounding the seed.



The new season's cones look attractive sitting alongside last year's ones on this bonsai Larch.



A picture of contemplation rounds off this week as I ponder the wonder of seeds making a list of some of the distribution strategies starting with the shedders, shakers, dumpers, flyers, hookers, tempters, catapulters