



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 38.....21st September 2022



Colchicum speciosum album



I wanted to share these pictures of a one hundred plus year old Rhododendron with you. Not for its leaves or for its flowers, but to show the twisted trunks and branches that form a natural living sculpture. Taking the pictures was tricky because it was in the deep shade cast by its own canopy as well as the many surrounding trees and shrubs.

As I move around taking images I appreciate the organic forms as the branches twist and cross often grafting themselves together where they cross.



The Rhododendron I show above is growing in an old estate I regularly walk around and as I was heading home through the wood I spotted this outcrop of mushrooms putting on their annual display.



I like the garden to give the impression of being natural, reflecting the season, and back home I also find a mushroom, hopefully the first of many, growing in the garden.



Our garden hybrid Crocus are popping up everywhere - many of these resulted from seed I sowed off our pot of *Crocus speciosus* subsp. *xantholaimos* which has now been elevated to specific level as *Crocus xantholaimos*. The pollen must have come from *Crocus pulchellus* or *Crocus kotschyanus* both of which were flowering in the bulb house at the same time. It is a fertile hybrid regularly producing seed so we have several generations of it appearing all around the garden including here where it is flowering up through the *Cyananthus* on a raised slab bed.





A group of Crocus flowers are pushing up between the stones in the cobble bed.



I enjoy seeing the spontaneous companion plantings that we get by allowing the plants to seed around - here both Crocus and a Meconopsis have seeded into the same ground where they are growing happily together.



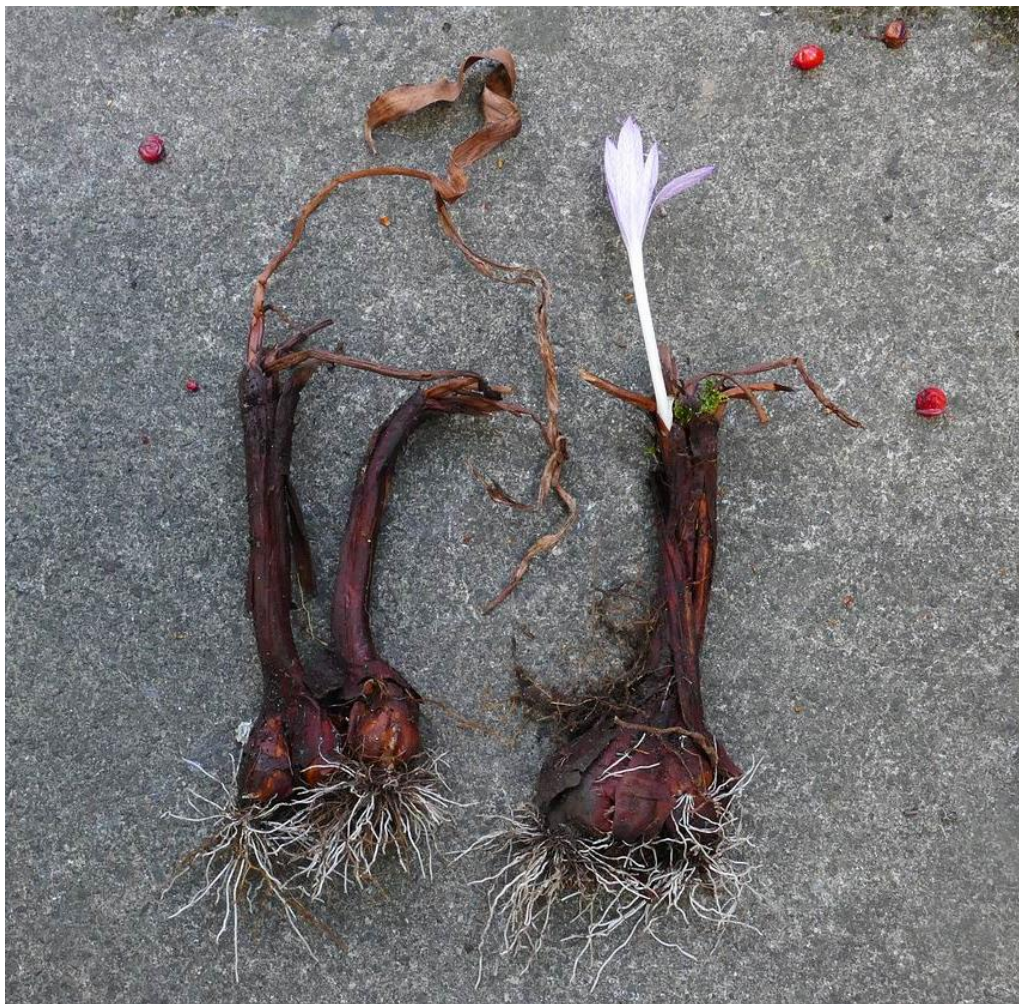
A few years ago I lifted and split a large group of **Colchicum davisii** growing on the rock garden bed re-planting the corms out singly in various beds across the garden. I like them best when they are growing singly or in a small cluster, but am not so keen on them when they increase into large solid clumps.



Colchicum davisii



Many of the colchium we grow in our gardens have been selected because they increase by offsets and secondary bulbs quickly forming clumps. In time these clumps will become too congested for their own good.



This group of **Colchicum agrippinum** has not been split for ten years or more becoming so congested that it has only produced a single flower this year. The corms which are replaced annually increase year on year resulting in intense competition for the available moisture and nutrients leading to the corms gradually getting smaller and smaller until they can no longer sustain flowers. If left the corms would continue to get smaller until eventually, if they are not split up, they would all die out. This type of increase, which is so successful in cultivation because of the intervention of gardeners, would not be successful in the wild which is why clumps are seldom seen in the wild where seed dominates.

Once split I re-planted a few of the larger corms back into the hole, refreshed with some garden compost, leaving a large amount of small corms to plant singly in a more natural looking style around the garden where they can build back to flowering size.



I don't like to dig in the beds, partly because we have so many bulbs and plants that could get disturbed or damaged, but sometimes it becomes necessary so I lift a second cluster of *Colchicum agrippinum* which I can locate by the brown remnants of leaves that remain on the surface – there is at least a third clump but it will have to wait as I can't spot it just now.



The groups of *Colchicum* cultivars continue blooming. The flowers of **Colchicum 'The Giant'**, in the foreground, look just as good when they are lying on the ground as they do when they stand erect.

I split and replanted these Colchium corms singly a few years ago so they are nicely spread out across the back of the bed. It is a plant we got many years ago as *C. laetum* which is now thought to be a selection of *Colchicum* × *byzantinum* - I read in the recent book on *Colchicum* that it has been given the cultivar name of **Colchicum 'Pink Star'**.



As you can see **Colchicum 'Pink Star'** is a prolific bloomer with each corm producing a progression of flowers and as it also produces secondary corms they will in time form clumps that are best split up every five years or so.



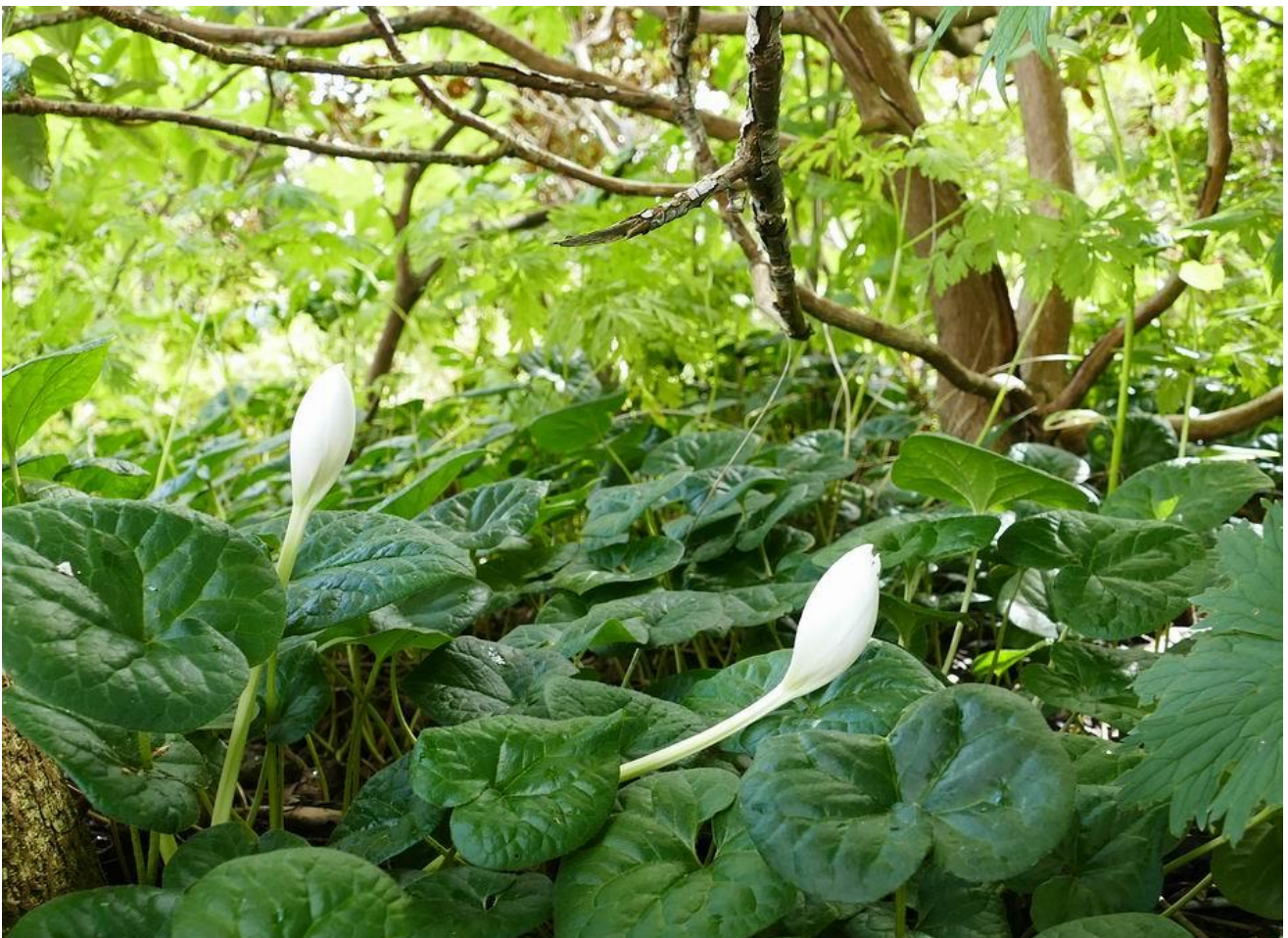
Colchicum 'Pink Star'



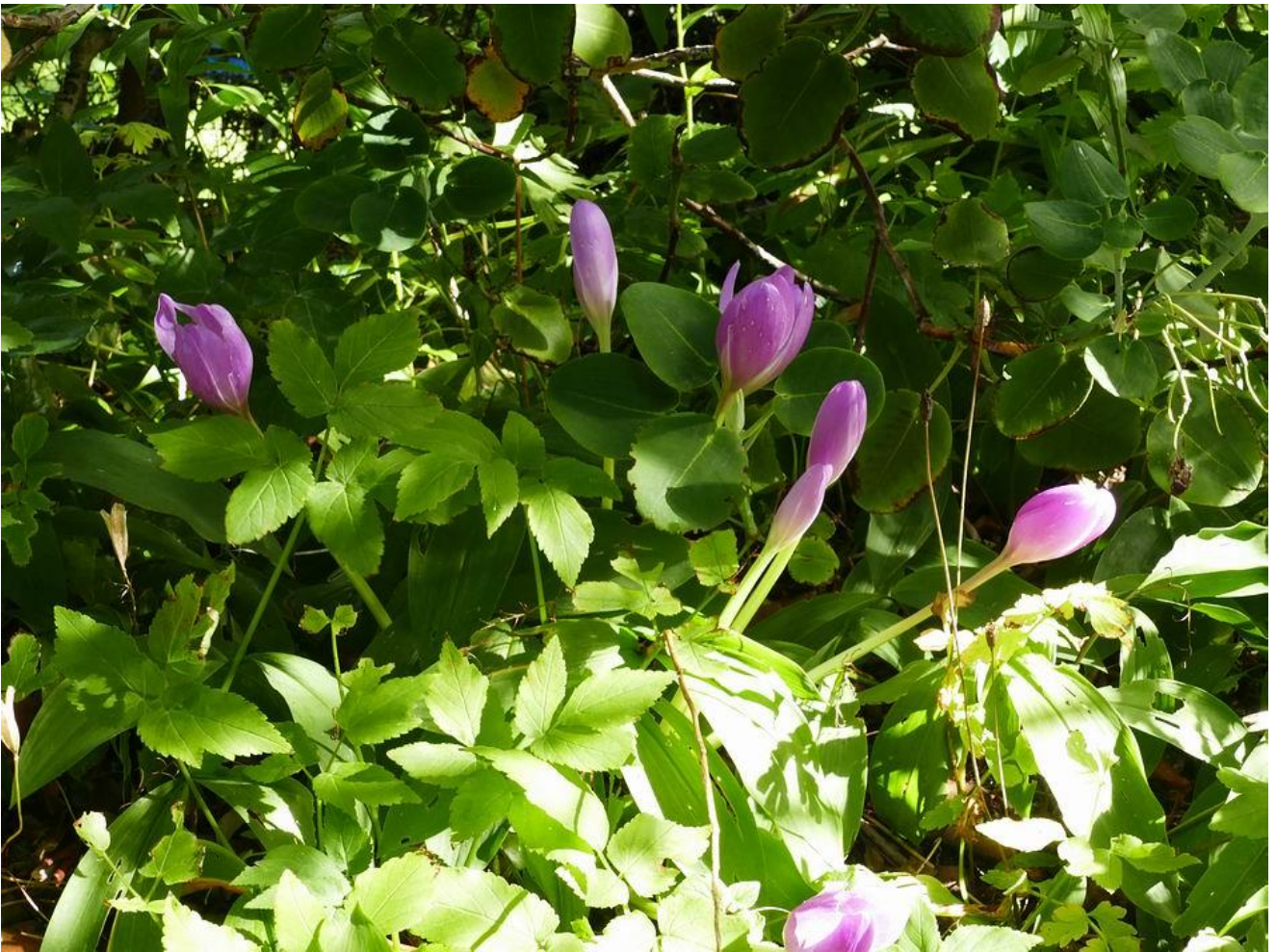
Colchicum 'Pink Star'



Many of the Colchicum and Crocus flowers are taller this year due to the recent weeks of cool, wet and dull weather which means they are more likely to get battered over.



A good way is to grow autumn flowering Colchicum and Crocus is to plant the where their flowers can come up through other plants giving the flowers a degree of support like these **Colchicum speciosum album** flowering through the ground covering evergreen leaves of **Asarum europaeum**.



More Colchicum flowers peeking up through a mixture of low growing plants.



The flower on the left has had the top chewed off by snails as it broke through the ground.



A dark form of **Colchicum speciosum**.



More and more Crocus flowers emerge around the garden and will feature in the coming weeks here in this bed they have been joined by a stray, dark flowered Colchicum.



While the recent wet weather has caused the Colchicum and Crocus flowers to grow tall the moisture returning to the soil is perfectly timed to support the bulbs as the new seasons roots are growing. The rain has also restored many other plants such as this **Jeffersonia diphylla** whose foliage collapsed during the dry periods to the extent that I thought the plant was going dormant early but it has been revived by the water extending its growth for a longer period which should result in even more flowers next spring.



Jeffersonia diphylla



The rhododendrons suffered in the unusually hot dry summer producing very small new growths and leaves but surprisingly many such as this *Rhododendron yakushimanum x tsariense* have plenty of flower buds.



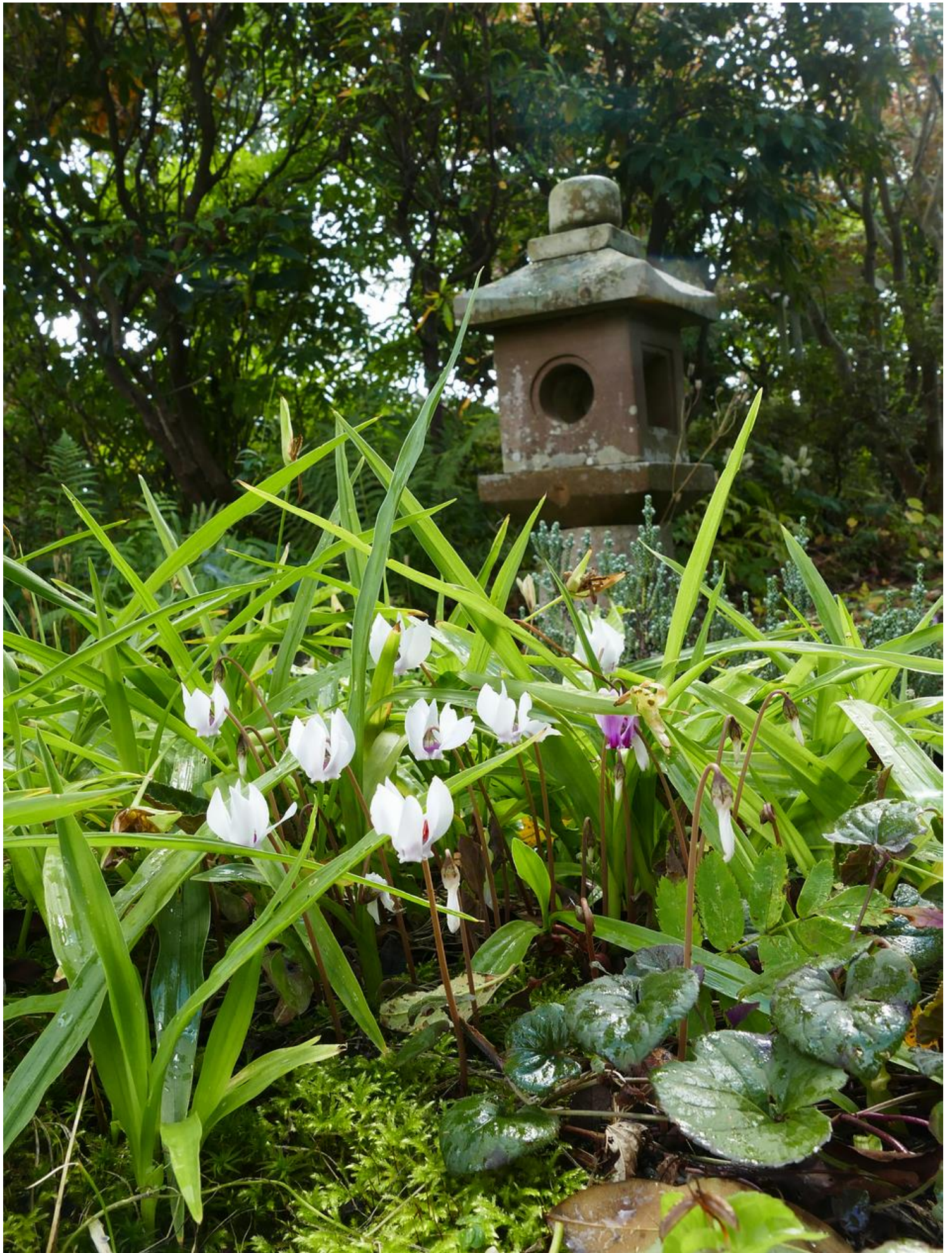
The beautiful small evergreen shrub *Vaccinium nummularia*, having flowered well, is now covered in fruits.



My eye is constantly drawn towards the ever-changing colours as the Uvularia leaves go from green through various degrees of yellow before they eventually turn dry and brown.



In the sand beds the first *Sternbergia sicula* is flowering.



Cyclamen continue to flower around the garden and along with the many the Colchicum and Crocus will feature in the coming weeks.....