SRGC ----- Bulb Log Diary ----- ISSN 2514-6114

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BULB LOG 11..... 12th November 2025

As October advances into November the garden is going through one of the biggest seasonal changes of the year. Having served their purpose supporting and nourishing the plants through the growing season, the deciduous leaves are now turning colour and falling from the plants. Daylight hours are noticeably reducing which hastens the autumn colours of the leaves as they flutter down to briefly decorate the ground, with a colourful carpet before they turn brown. Then the leaves need to be cleared from the pathways and where they have fallen on smaller plants where they can cause damage.

I will leave the leaves on most of the bulb and shrub beds where they form a natural mulch that can break down to feed the soil.

These leaves form a natural organic mulch which supports the fungi whose far reaching mycelium, turn what could be barren soil into a rich medium. The action of the fungi help breakdown the organic matter converting the nutrients it contains into a soluble form that the plants can easily absorb through their roots.

I am very happy to see the many fungi that appear around the garden, mostly in the backend of the year, as it is a clear sign that we have a healthy soil.

I also find them very attractive dotting around the garden.
From the evidence that many of these fungi get chewed they also provide a source of food for some of the smaller fauna that shares our garden.

I will move some of the bigger leaves, such as the tree peonies, which tend to fall in a soggy heap at the base of the plants, taking them to the compost heaps where they can break down before being spread later as a mulch or used in potting mixes. As you can see from the images, we have a balanced mixture of deciduous and evergreen plants. The leaves of evergreens such as Pines and Rhododendrons do not last for ever some can stay green for a few years before they drop but they only drop after the new crop of leaves has grown hence the plants appear evergreen.

It is easy to find beauty, hope and pleasure in the autumn shut down. The beauty is in the shapes and colours of the stems and leaves as they get ready to fall, the hope is that the fat seeds will produce new plants plus as I have already mentioned the goodness that is returned to the soil as the leaves decay.

The autumn colour is developing on the trees by the day indicating this is going to be one of the most colourful autumn seasons of recent years.

Some plants in the herbaceous group almost defy that description by staying green through out the winter and these tend to be the native species such as Digitalis and some ferns.

Silene dioica and Primula vulgaris can also stay green all winter unless we get prolonged deep frosts. Their green leaves get chewed and tatty and when I come to mulch, I cover them up which seems to invigorate the plants.

It is not the old, tired leaves that we see on **Cyclamen coum** and hederifolium but the recently emerged new flush of leaves that can stay growing for almost a year if the summer is not too hot and dry. I need to ensure that these leaves do not get covered in falling leaves.

Cyclamen hederifolium

I love the hope that the new growth of Cyclamen leaves gives to a garden that is otherwise shutting down to hide from the winter months.

It is also at this time of year that other plants and features become more obvious such as the ferns that stay evergreen and the streaked pattern of the bark on this Acer which now rises through a lovely red carpet of the fallen leaves.

Many years ago, I planted out a small pot of silver leaved **Cyclamen hederifolium** seedlings and it has slowly expanded every year as more seeds germinate where they fall from the capsule.

In other gardens the seeds get distributed by ants, but we have none of these, so I have to intervene spreading them across the garden either by scattering the seeds or carefully lifting and transplanting the tiny seedlings as they germinate in clusters.

Another update on the progress of the small leaved Rhododendrons that I cut back to the ground earlier this year. Apart from the few that had already died out some years ago they are all now covered in new growth, and I can tidy up the chopped off stems trimming the stumps back to where the growths emerge.

I don’t expect to get many flowers on this new growth until it has matured for a year then I hope we will get domes of colour as the plants flower freely again.

There are plenty more fungi in the front garden growing in harmony with the pines, acers and other trees and shrubs that now dominate this space.

Heading back towards the house it is hard to spot where the paths are, until I clear the leaves, something I am reluctant to do while they are so colourful.

Previously I looked at how the troughs were faring in our hot dry summer - showing how the plants suffered in these conditions without any watering. Now with the return of the cooler weather and rain I can report that most of the plants are mounting a recovery with a late burst of growth.

Saxifrages have rehydrated and are looking good while some of the weedy plants that appeared around the edges die back.

The trough of **Erinus alpinus** is also looking much better now with the surviving plants in good growth and the spaces left where some had died out are now filled with healthy new self-sown seedlings.

Masses of Erinus alpinus seedlings ensure that this trough, which is already over 20 years old, is sustainable in the long term and will provide great colour every year with minimum input.

A thirty year plus crevice planting in this trough is also recovering from the drought with the surviving small patch of Raoulia australis looking very healthy now and will hopefully it will grow out to fill the space left by the die back. I am also interested to see what else may appear when I cut off the dead brown stems.

This small surviving patch of **Raoulia australis** is far removed from what we might see on a show bench or even being offered for sale at a nursery, but I have seen plants exactly like this in the wild where they also have to survive unaided.

With a name like **Symphyotrichum novi-belgii** you can see why most gardeners call this plant a Michaelmas daisy. This is not something we planted but one of those plants that arrived as a volunteer, blown in on the wind, and welcomed by us for its late season colour especially this form with the slightly larger flowers.

As the garden starts to slow down the growth in the sand beds and bulb houses is going strong and it is important that I ensure the bulbs have all the water they need as they are in active growth through the winter months. The driftwood sticks are to give the **Tropaeolum azureum** something to climb up and reach the wire mesh on the back wall.

Flowers will appear all through the winter and spring months until May/June when it gets too warm and the bulbs retreat back underground to rest out the summer.

Hyacinthoides lingulata

The first of this year's Bulbocodium group Narcissus flowers has opened and they will be among the flowers that will bring us joy all through the cold dark winter months. Probably due to the mild conditions they are a bit later to flower this year. They seem respond to a temperature gradient rather than a finite value.

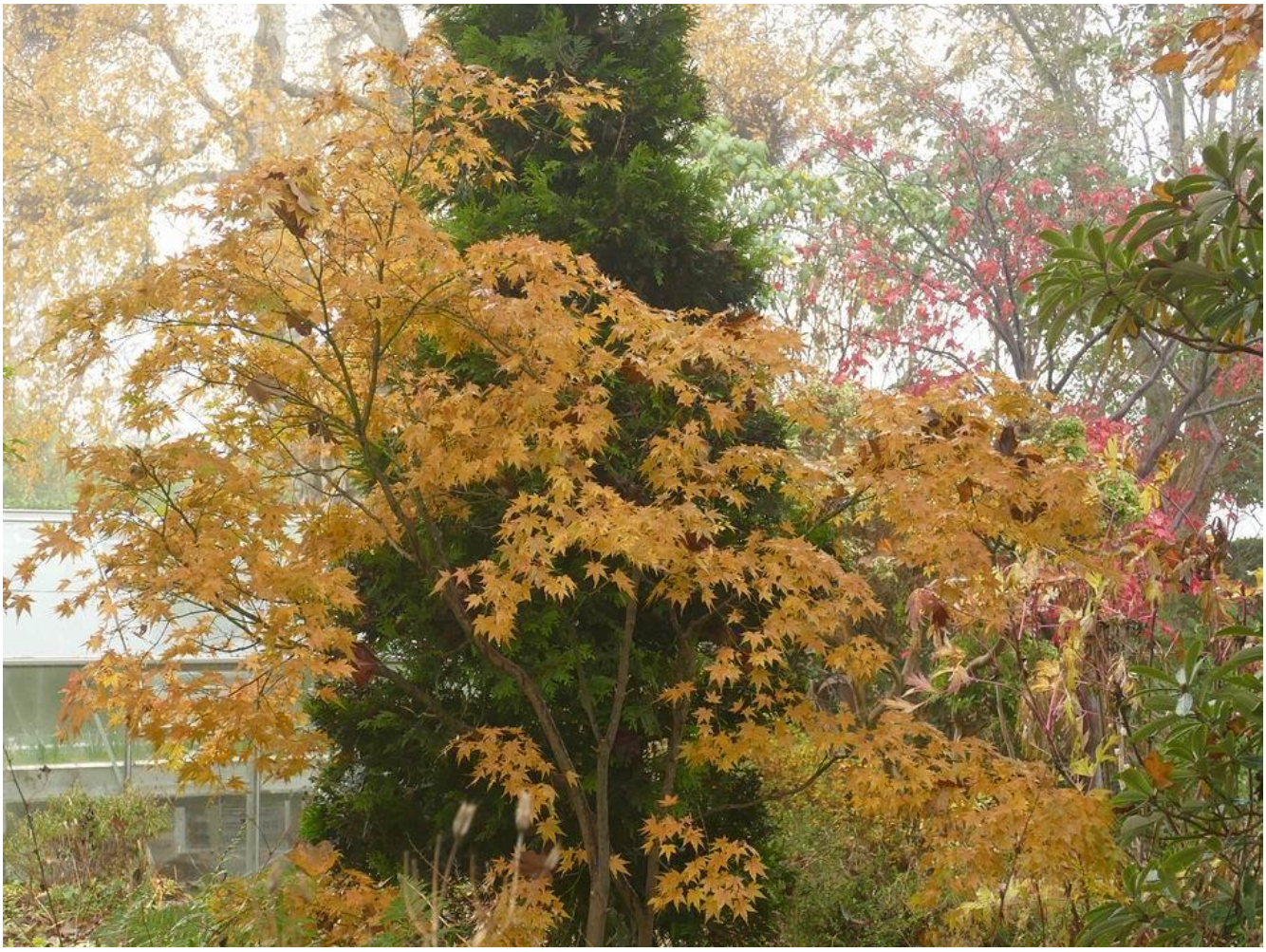
While the Narcissus will be the dominant flowers sporadic crocus flowers will appear such as **Crocus kotschyanus.**

Crocus ochroleucus albus

At the start of the last four weeks the autumn colours were just starting but since then there have been an explosion of colour which in the early misty morning light seemed to glow as if it had an internal light source. I am trying to share this effect in the following sequence of images which I am afraid cannot quite capture the experience.

Even the **Maianthemum stellatum** puts on a colourful display as it collapses on the ground.

Roscoea leaves



For a short time, the Acers around the garden put on a glorious show like a silent firework display.

Trees, trees, our glorious trees give a garden shape form and character.

The haar, sea mist, wafted in and out of the garden until it was eventually burned off by the rising sun.

Autumn in the garden

I now have a few months to clear the paths before the early bulbs come through, and the garden goes into another annual cycle.

The evergreen ground covering Asarum europaeum lies below the brilliant red of an acer in full autumn colour….