



BULB LOG 02.....12th January 2022



Narcissus bulbocodium



The Hoop petticoat Daffodils fall under the *Narcissus bulbocodium* section which implies that they are also relatively closely related and sharing common ancestors, this explains why they are so promiscuous, crossing freely with each other. Wild hybrids commonly occur between *Narcissus bulbocodium*, *Narcissus cantabricus* and *Narcissus albidus*. All such hybrids arising between these species appear very similar and look very like many of the plants

that we grow. I am constantly confused by them and struggle to understand what the 'correct' name should be for many of our plants. I often stick with the name that they carried when we originally got them whether by seed or as bulbs but understand that the confusion and mis-naming has been around for a long time and is not likely to be cleared up in my lifetime. I read as much as I can about *Narcissus* in books and online and am especially fascinated

by accounts of wild populations where perhaps the best distinctions can be drawn although hybrids also exist in these populations. What I have concluded is that this is far from a stable section and even people who study them carefully in the wild, where the distinctions may be clearer, do not always have an agreement on what they are looking at. I will continue to grow them and take great delight in their flowers that bring us



winter interest looking at all the subtle variations of form. The two forms on this page as well as on the cover all came to us as *Narcissus bulbocodium*.



Narcissus bulbocodium



Narcissus bulbocodium with very exerted style and stamens.



I think these are hybrids of *Narcissus albidus* which is still included as a form of *Narcissus cantabricus* by some but I think the separation is appropriate. Although the colour suggests that there are two forms here the flowers are a straw yellow when they first open, fading to pure white as the flowers expands.



***Narcissus albidus* hybrids**



Narcissus hybrids





While there are many Narcissus in flower there are lots more to come as you can see from the many buds visible in these two pictures.



Narcissus buds galore.



Recently I mentioned that I thought some chewing of the flowers that I found was more likely to be caused by slugs than snails but while most of the adult snails are in semi hibernation obviously there are newly hatched babies looking to feed off of our flowers.



Narcissus bulbocodium albidus hybrids.



Not all Snowdrops survive in our garden so when we first receive a 'special' Galanthus we often grow it in the bulb house until we build up numbers before trying them outside which is what we did with Galanthus 'E.A. Bowles'.



Last year the pot was crammed full of bulbs most of which we planted outside, keeping just this few back as insurance.



In preparation of imminent early new development I have managed to do some more removing of the old now dead stalks, this time around the front garden. As I cut back the old stems of a *Veratrum fimbriatum* I was delighted to spot the green buds for this year were sitting at the surface already to spring into growth as the year progresses. The

attractive fan shaped leaves will emerge in the spring before the plants eventually deliver their spectacular flowers in September.



Veratrum fimbriatum

As I cleared to cut the old stems I disturbed the organic surface around the shoots of *Veratrum fimbriatum* and was encouraged to see the white traces of mycelium indicating that we have a natural healthy soil which I covered over again with some of the leaf debris. I know that because we leave it as late as practicable before we cut back old growths as well as leaving much of the leaf fall in place many people would see our garden as untidy but you can be over-tidy. Removing all organic material down to the bare soil is robbing it of nature's way of feeding the soil and in addition to benefiting the plants I get great pleasure in watching the birds who also benefit, like a pair of Wrens I have just been watching as I write, foraging through the leaf debris on the ground while Coal tits and Goldcrests are searching high above for any food they can find hiding around the swelling buds of the Acer trees.



Similarly I found a number of Peony buds with their noses sitting just proud of the surface where they can better gauge when the conditions are ready to burst into growth. What the actual parameters that the plants respond to are one of the things that makes plants so fascinating to me.





Helleborus buds are also evident at the base of the old stems, these were removed shortly after I took this picture, also note the growth of fresh green Colchicum leaves that have recently emerged.



Looking down from the front garden we have a view of the sea which on a bright day draws a sharp horizon line.



Despite the cold and the pots being frozen most of the time the buds of *Eranthis pinnatifida* pink forms that were only just peeking through the surface a few weeks ago continue to slowly push up and unwind. These are second generation seedlings grown from a group of pink types.



***Eranthis pinnatifida* pink**

Eranthis pinnatifida pink seedlings

Sitting beside the parent pots there are pots of seedlings sown when they were ripe in May last year and these ones are germinating now.



I find that if seeds are sown timeously* then they will germinate at the same time as the parent plants come into growth and this is generally the case across all plants. This timing is confirmed here where the seedlings sown from the pink form have a seed leaf while with another pot of seed sown at the same time from a different line are ten to fourteen days behind with the parents and seed only just showing in the last few days.

*timeously – a Scottish word meaning “in good time”



Iris 'Katharine Hodgkin' shoots pushing up though the frozen ground.



The most advanced of the hellebore flowers is this one that self-seeded into the gravel where the flower bud and bracts are fringed with frost.



I also spot some self-seeding in action as this fallen stem of *Lilium martagon* sheds its contents across the leaf litter where much of it should germinate but left to its own devices, only some is likely to grow to on to maturity.



The frost also forms across the perfectly hardy new foliage of *Corydalis* 'Craigton Purple'.



Rhododendron cephalanthum is a real treasure and this one is around thirty years old.





Ferns are especially valuable planted under the heavy shade of trees.



Colchicum can also be grown close to and under trees such as here with the growth of the new leaves.



New season's growth appears among the debris from the past season with leaf growth on *Colchicum* *Galanthus* and *Corydalis*.



New *Allium* leaves rise up through last season's now dried and broken flowers stems.

As well as all the herbaceous growths that come and go through the seasons it is important to have some evergreen subjects or even ever-silver as seen with **Celmisia hectorii** in the foreground and the spiky foliage of **Celmisia lyallii** behind the dwarf pine.



With frost under my feet I look up towards the **Betula utilis** set off beautifully against the clear blue sky and that is where I will leave you this week.....