



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 14.....6th April 2022



Narcissus bulbocodium



I will leave the snowy scene for the moment, choosing to share some of the many pictures I take on my walks where, just as in the garden, nature is waking up.

One area regular readers will be familiar with are fields a ten minute walk away that are scheduled as green belt and have been left wild for decades. At one time it was a market garden where they obviously grew daffodils commercially and we have been aware of the remnants of that production growing in the fields and woods since we first walked these fields over fifty years ago.

This week I saw a promo for a popular paper touting the annual feature of caring for your daffodils after flowering. I did not need to read

it to know they would say cut off the dead flowers but hopefully they have moved away from tying the leaves into neat bundles or even cutting them off, all of which are completely wrong. I have repeated my advice many times but with so many papers and magazines churning out this less than accurate advice every year I rise to give an alternative opinion. The best thing you can do is to let them die down naturally and if they are getting very congested and no longer flowering well then, as the leaves are turning yellow and dyeing back lift and replant the bulbs giving them more space to grow without the competition.



Daffodils in the wood.

Most of these cultivar forms of Narcissus are growing and flowering well as they have for decades without human intervention. Some clumps such as those on the right are not flowering so well this year but should build up to produce some flowers next year. You should also note from these few pictures that they do not grow in isolation but are surrounded by various types of vegetation such as grasses, herbs, through bramble thickets, among trees and on top of dykes.



Narcissus flowering through a thicket of brambles which offers protection for much of the year and any feeding comes from the old herbage, including their own leaves and stems collapsing, decomposing and returning nutrients back to the soil.



In commercial production or in gardens where you want rapid increase then regular lifting and dividing is advisable but here nature shows us that these daffodils can grow perfectly well without any intervention.



Many of the large trumpet Narcissus cultivars such as these do not set seed and having observed this area for decades I have seen no evidence of these daffodils seeding and apart from occasional locals picking a small bunch these plantings have grown all by themselves. We only have a few clumps of the large trumpet type daffodils in the garden which like in the fields and wood are remnants from some of our earliest plantings.



A nice patch of **Allium ursinum**, commonly called ramsons or wild garlic, makes an early appearance growing before the tree canopy reduces the light levels.



Primula vulgaris

Another of my nearby walks takes me through an old estate to look for a colony of primroses where they have been seeding and growing among the trees for perhaps a hundred years – we have been visiting them for fifty of these. When left to their own devices they mostly grow among the grasses and other plants.



Primula vulgaris



Along with the typical primrose yellow forms there are a number of the pink **Primula vulgaris ssp. sibthorpii** which I speculate must have been introduced to the garden at the same early period.



This is one of those magical circumstances when a primrose has chosen a tree to be its growing companion. Some seed found its way onto to the mosses growing among the root buttress creating this delightful vignette – a lesson from nature that should inspire us to be more creative with our plantings in the garden.



**Narcissus
bulbocodium**

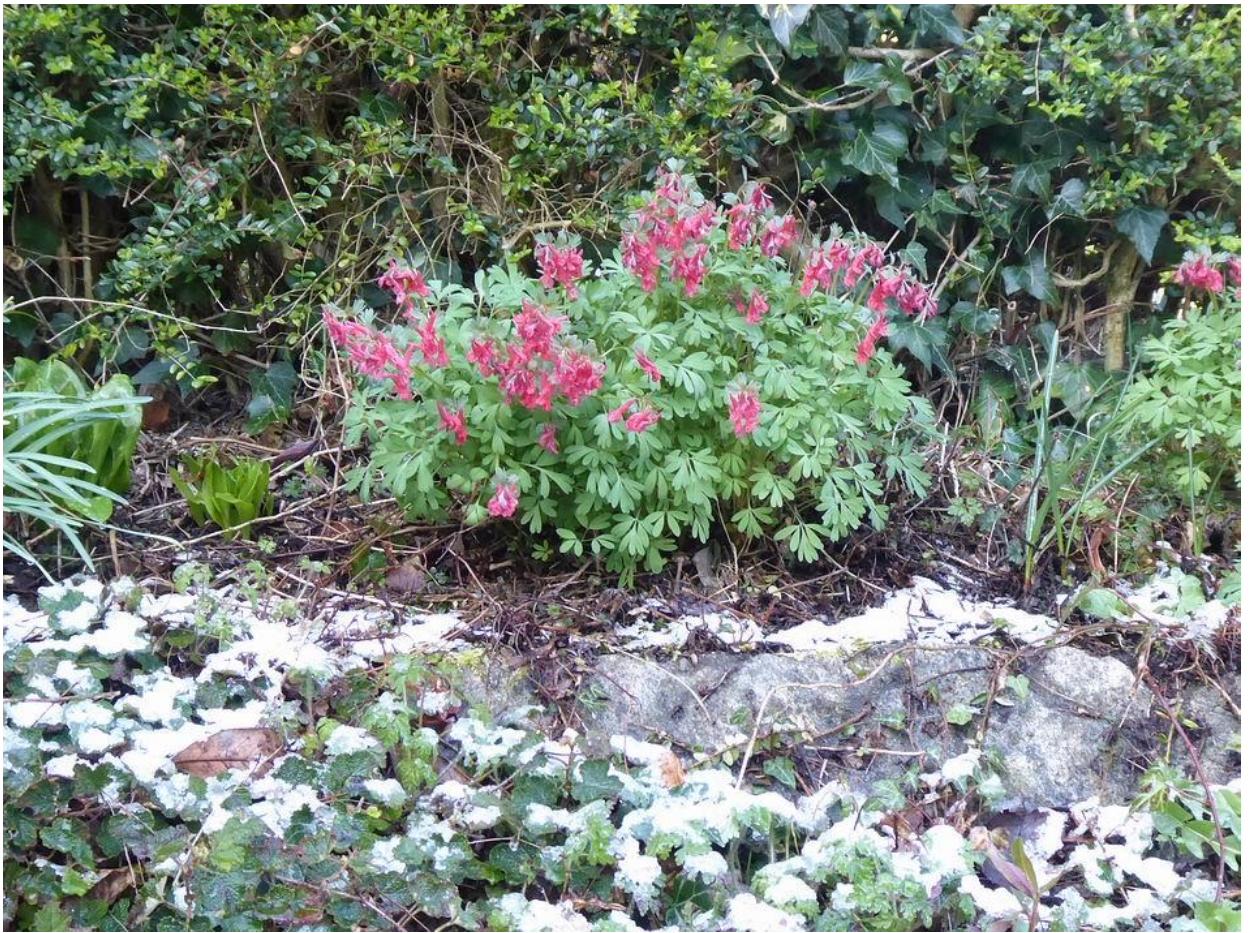
Returning to the garden I am welcomed by some hardy bulbs, such as Narcissus bulbocodium, flowering in the front drive undeterred by frost and snow which has returned after a period of sunny weather.



For a number of days this past week we woke to a light covering of snow which was mostly gone by mid-day, melted by the warmth of the sunshine except in the north facing front garden where the sun does not reach yet.



I originally planted a few tubers of this red/pink form **Corydalis solida** on top of the wall in front of the hedge and the tubers which should at least double in number each year have grown into clumps. However more exciting to me are the seedling plants that have established below and at ground level from the falling seeds.



Corydalis solida

The *Corydalis solida* seedlings come in differing colours; some similar to the parent others are purple.



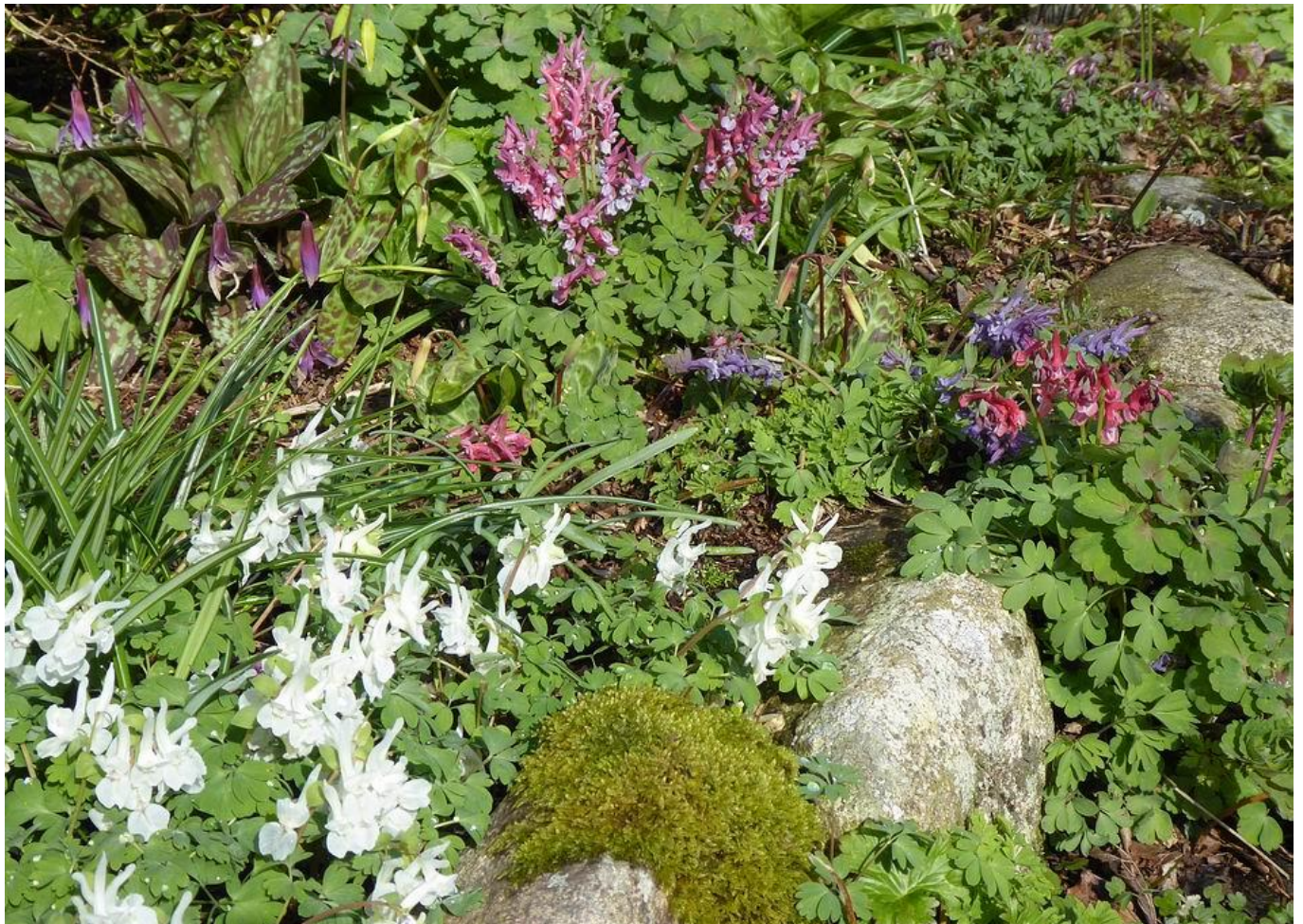
While we have raised hundreds of *Corydalis solida* seedlings I have only named one: ***Corydalis* 'Craigton Red'** which at the time was the darkest red form that we had seen. To get the best rate of increase from the tubers they are best lifted and divided every year which is why I have kept this 'Craigton Red' growing in a basket. I only divide those in the garden occasionally if I think the clump is going backwards – preferring to leave them to seed.



***Corydalis*
*solida***



Having learned from nature that plants don't grow in isolation I am happy to let the corydalis seed around among the other bulbs, *Iris sibirica* and shrubs where they each have their own growing and flowering seasons.



A mix of *Corydalis* species seeding around bring us variations in colours.



Purple form of *Corydalis solida*



Seedlings spilling out of the bed onto the edges of the path are now a typical scene in our garden.



Differing colours in these side by side seedlings



Corydalis solida



The cream coloured **Corydalis malkensis** are seeding around the Erythronium sand plunge with **Corydalis solida** seeding in the company of **Hepatica nobilis** among the small moss covered concrete landscape.



Hepatica nobilis and **Corydalis solida**



These plants are perfectly hardy for us surviving the nightly snowfall which has mostly melted by lunchtime.





I love this symbiotic relationship of Hepatica and Corydalis – the colours work so well and while the Corydalis foliage initially over grows the landscape its dominance is brief because in a few weeks the seeds will be shed and the plant dies back to the tuber exposing the Hepatica just as the new leaves are breaking out from the bud.



I have been establishing a slight variation of this planting at the other side of the path with some granite rock on which the moss will not grow so readily. These Hepatica seedlings are now three years old and starting to flower. Hepatica seedlings seem very slow to grow in the first and second year but then gather pace after that.



Three year old Hepatica seedling,



Hepatica and Corydalis growing and flowering together in one of our small landscapes.



We have a number of forms of **Erythronium tuolumense**, some raised from seed, this one is always the first to flower as much as a month before later ones.



Our planting style reflect the scenes I see in the wild where a spring green carpet emerges to cover the bare ground.



We use a range of plants to provide ground cover- associating low growing types with plantings of smaller plants. In this picture there are four main ground cover plants: in the foreground it is a carpet of moss that covers the sand bed beyond that on the right is **Anemone ranunculoides** to the left it is **Adoxa moschatellina** and top right across



the path the taller growing **Dicentra formosa** and **eximia** make perfect companions for the taller growing Erythronium, Trillium etc. to grow through.

Narcissus cyclamineus and **Scoliopus halli** growing happily through a carpet of **Adoxa moschatellina**



Narcissus cyclamineus are well adapted to cope with the snow coming and going and hopefully they are getting on with making seed to grow the colony.



Here another group of **Narcissus cyclamineus** are enjoying the sunshine after the snow. Every season nature shows us the way delivering lessons to those willing to learn and perhaps the greatest lesson is that plants rarely grow in isolation. Through millennia of trial and error most plants have evolved to grow together in protective, supportive communities rather than in isolation. I was going to end there but as I write on Tuesday morning it has been snowing heavily so I have added two more pictures of the snowy scene below.



Garden Tuesday 5th April

