



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 20.....18th May 2022



Matteuccia struthiopteris



Gymnocarpium dryopteris

Over recent weeks the Bulb Log has looked at the explosion of colour in the garden provided by the mass spring flowering, so this week I decided to celebrate green, in the form of foliage. The emergence of all that fresh new spring foliage is something we should all appreciate more. We often say plants have a short season, and if we concentrate on flowers that may be the case, but many have decorative leaves that will be with us until the autumn. While flowers are an essential part of seed production the leaves are more important because they nourish the plants



allowing them to stay healthy and grow.

Because the foliage is around for several months it is decoratively more important to the garden so we should prioritise planting for foliage.

Plants don't come much greener than the ferns, which should have a place in every garden. I love the sculptural way the new fronds emerge in the spring.

It is only a few weeks ago that I cut back last year's fronds on the evergreen ferns we grow some of which are large, producing 600 litres of old frond growth that I shredded

down for compost. The Oak Fern, **Gymnocarpium dryopteris**, runs about providing a lovely low growing green cover to one of the beds where in recent weeks we enjoyed early flowering bulbs and Hepatica – these plants are perfectly happy growing among and in the shade of the fern as are the many others yet to come.

The Shuttlecock Fern, *Matteuccia struthiopteris* is one of the larger types which looks especially attractive when the light shines through the fresh new fronds.

This one spreads by pushing out thick dark stolons which will form a colony. If there are too many, the new growths are easily controlled by lifting the young plants as they sit as buds on the ground.



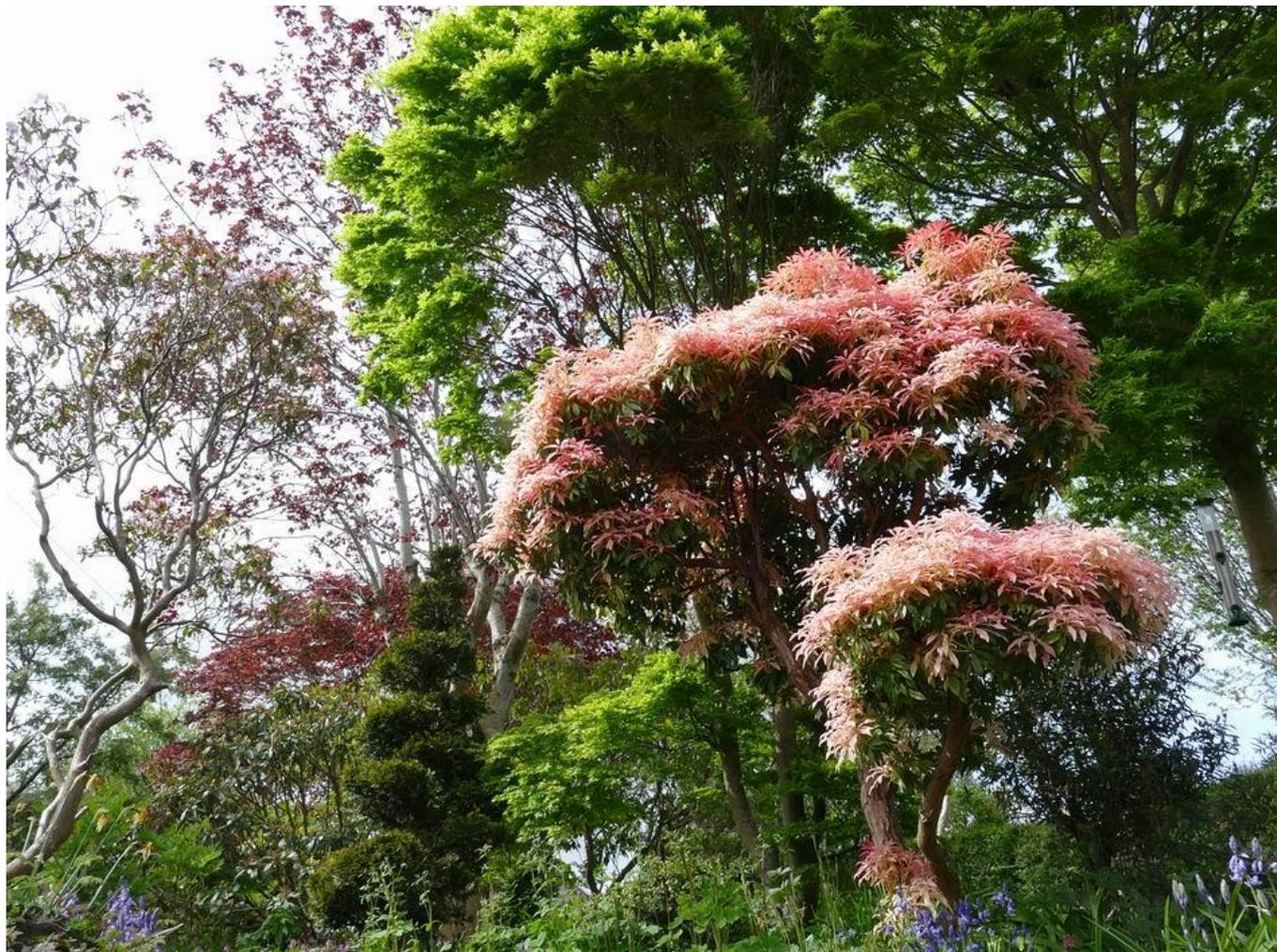
Growers should use a wide variation of foliage when planting their gardens where stunning effects can be created whether by design or accident as here where a *Rogersia* sp. grows among the ferns.



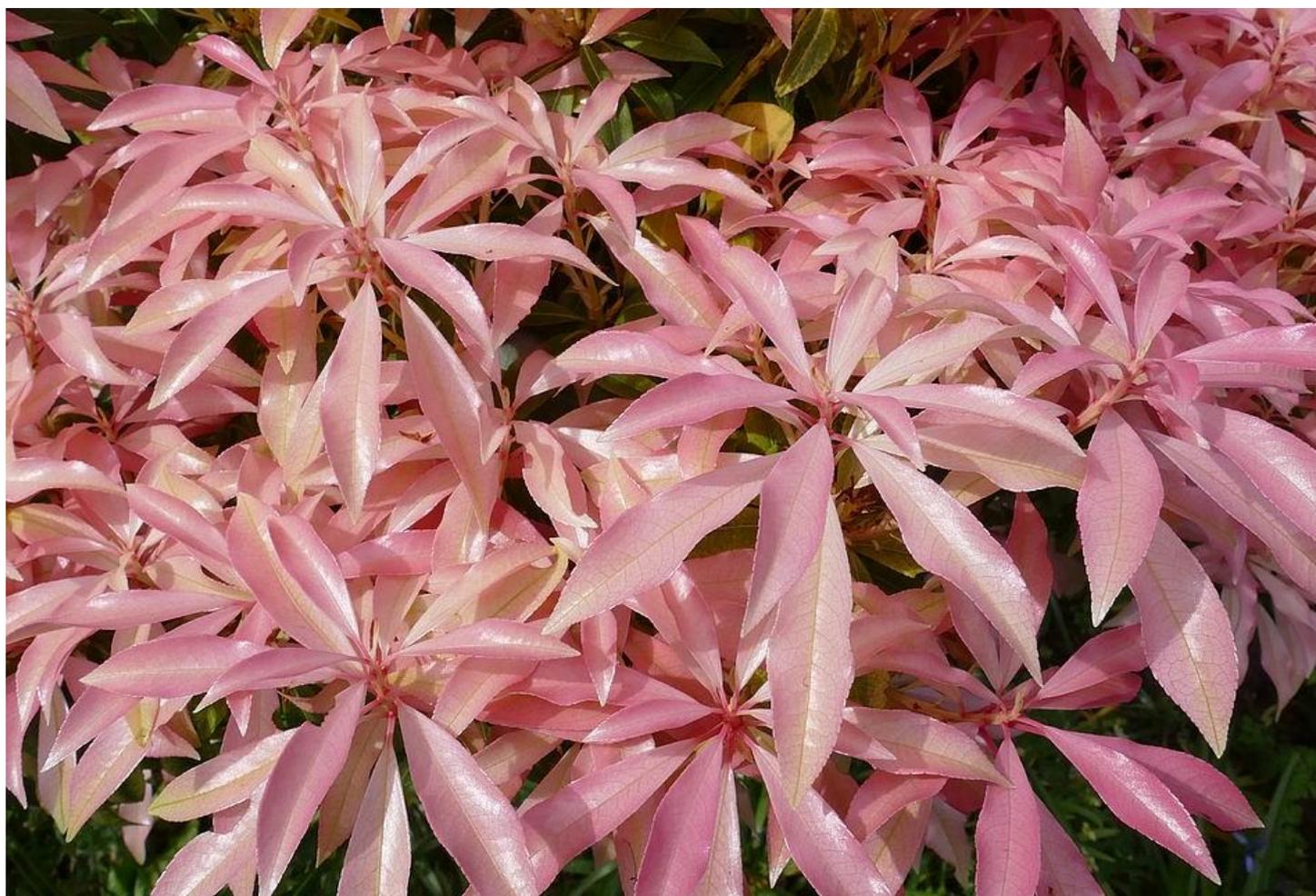
This is one of the larger evergreen ferns that I cut back a few weeks ago – now the new growth has emerged and will soon expand to screen the view through to the compost corner again –one of the many uses we put ferns to in the garden.



The new leaf growth is not just at ground level it is also above our heads where the tree canopy is in growth.



Not all foliage is green: some trees have red leaves while the new leaf growth of this Pieris emerges bright pink, turning cream before it eventually takes on a green colour.





Red leaved Acers, big and small, bring a welcome colour to the canopy. This apparently small Acer has been with us since we started to garden and it had grown to the same height as me with an equally wide spread but over recent years it suffered die back with the branches dying out. Last year I cut it down to the stump and we were pleased to see buds breaking with new growths extending out. During growth I continually cut

back to encourage branching, which I will continue to do this year, I hope to build a new head and give this fifty year old plant a new lease of life.



It is not only leaves that are above our heads many of the trees such as this Acer 'Crimson King' are covered in flowers which are buzzing with bees and other insects feeding on the pollen.

Conifers also have flowers which, when successfully pollinated, will produce cones. Here we see last year's open brown cones along with the new green cones ones set against the lovely new, soft green needles on a larch. As well as taking in the overall view before us it is always worth focusing in on the details of the plants.



And not all trees are above our head as this bonsai larch has spent its thirty plus years growing in a pot.



Selected low growing dwarf willows bring a range of foliage from tiny green leaves to relatively large silver ones.



The garden is going green as the growth of new foliage is appearing across the many habitats such as on these smaller plants in the raised slab beds.



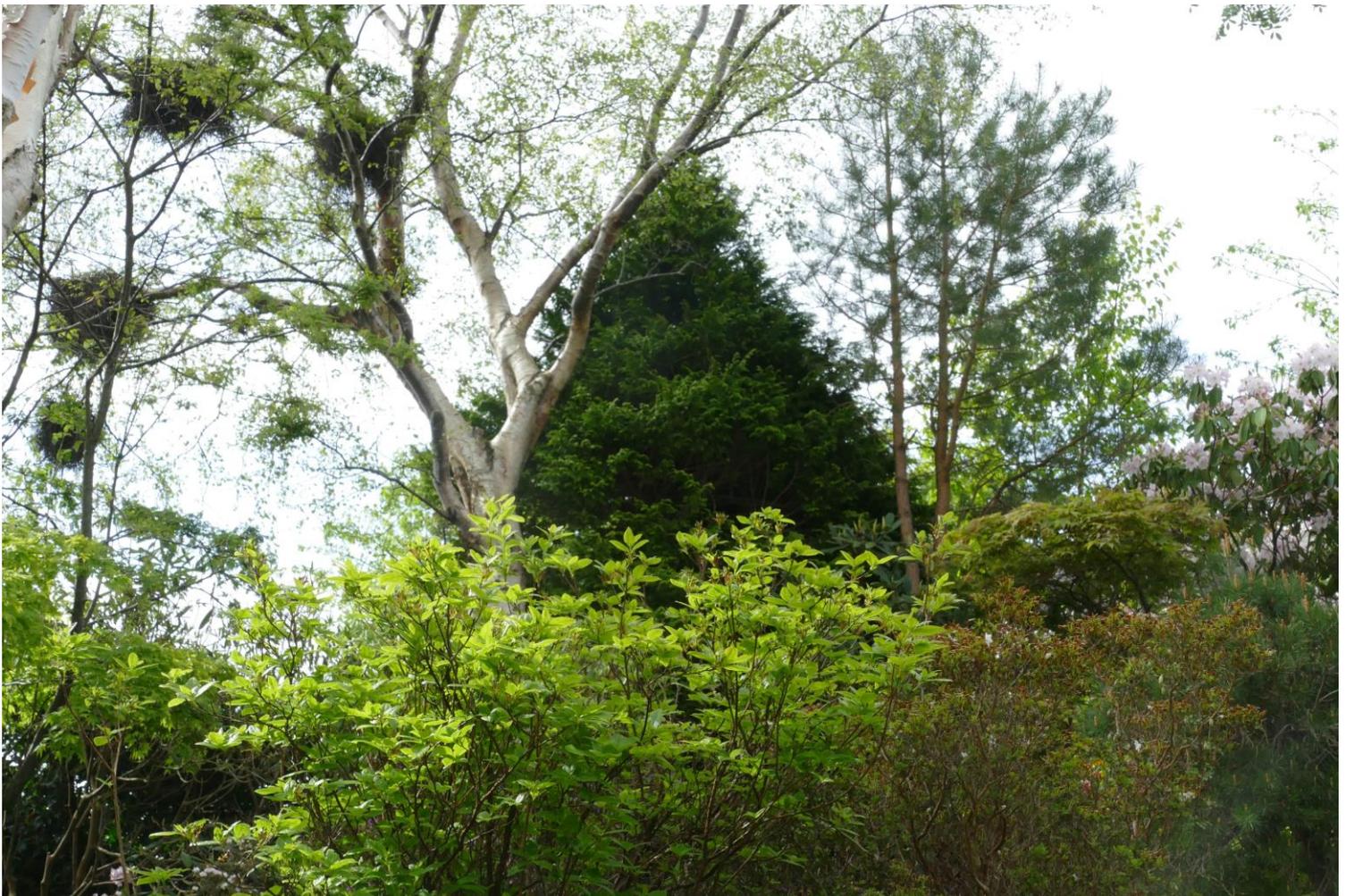
Primula marginata* and *Potentilla pulvinaris



Potentilla pulvinaris



Although the plants often flower apart in time they leaf together - here the yet-to-flower **Dactylorhiza** growing though the foliage of **Primula marginata** that flowered some weeks ago.





The plants may be different but **nature**, above, shows me the way to grow them in close communities. I did think that one of the main differences between the nature around me and our garden was the international range of plants that we grow. However there are many plants that were transported by humans and over centuries have become naturalised such as ***Symphytum tuberosum*** growing with ***Aegopodium podagraria*** and ***Anthriscus sylvestris***.



Garden



Allium ursinum: observing the way plants are growing in **Nature**.



Imitating nature's planting style in the **Garden**.

I am not going to name every plant and leaf that we grow - it is up to you to seek out those that best suit your purpose and gardens for aesthetics and compatibility.



Nature – The small pink flowers are *Claytonia sibirica* introduced from Pacific North America around 1838 and now naturalised in damp shady places.



Garden – select plants with different types of foliage and plant them in groups to provide interest.



We use a wide range of plants in the garden mixing up the unusual with those often considered 'weedy' - all are happy and grow better because they are in mutually supporting communities.





Tall plants such as tree peonies are attractive as they rise up through the lower green carpet.



Acer japonicum leaves.



Milium effusum 'Aureum' – Bowles' Golden Grass is allowed to seed around growing in a natural way among the bulbs and shrubs – it is easy to remove any unwanted plants.



Evergreen plants such as Celmisia will give interest and structure all year round but they still put on a display when their fresh new foliage emerges in the summer.



Primula marginata



***Maianthemum bifolium yakushmanum* growing with *Cornus suecica*.**



Even the pond turns green with the Duck Weed!





Garden

When the plantings in the garden look so like nature that it becomes difficult to tell which is which, then I'm happy.



Nature



Humans have been ‘gardening’ for around 23,000 years while nature has been doing it for millennia so I know who I will take lessons from.

I hope to encourage more of you to adopt a natural approach in you gardens, I know many of you already do but sometimes we need encouragement to embrace this style that some regard as ‘weedy’ and untidy.

The final two pictures this week show the sprinkler watering the ferns.

Watering the garden is not something that we used to have to do but for the third year in a row we have had below the long term average rainfall through the spring and I have reverted to doing some selective watering.

I have written that gardening is a journey and climate change has meant that journey is taking us on an unexpected route through relatively warmer, drier conditions which is affecting some of the shade and moisture loving plants we grow. Like the plants we will have to adapt to theses changing conditions with the knowledge that we will be giving the plants the best chance by imitating nature’s ground covering planting methods,so the ground will be shaded enabling it to retain as much moisture as possible.....