



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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Lilium pyrenaicum

The main aim of a cover image is to grab your attention and I am often torn about the best picture to use. I have learned through sharing my pictures for many years through print, lectures and digital media that while close up plant portraits can be the most dramatic it is images that put the relationship between plants into context which the viewers found to be the most interesting.

When I am taking pictures I make sure that I capture a range of images from the close up details of the flowers to the more important wider image showing the habitat and companion plants like the one on this week's cover that shows *Lilium pyrenaicum* growing among its companions.



This picture shows a plant, that I think is **Potentilla reptans**, but apart from the flower and surrounding leaves the image tells us nothing about the environment it is growing in.



Widening the view immediately illustrates that this is a wild plant growing at the seaside with the Aberdeen harbour mouth and estuary of the river Dee in the background.



This beautiful colony of **Potentilla reptans** is growing in a very specific, drier habitat towards the top of the steep banks which lead down to the beach. It grows in relationship with some fine grasses which I poked down among to find moss and despite the fact that we have had very little rain for weeks there was some moisture illustrating the benefit of growing in supportive ground covering plant communities.



To the right of the high dry bank, where the *Potentilla* are growing, a low moist seep runs down to the shore where I spot some ***Dactylorhiza purpurella*** scattered among the lush grasses all the way down to the rocks and sand.



It is natural scenes like these which inspire me and I try to mimic them in some form into the garden. Informed by nature we make and plant various habitats across the garden, including troughs, then wait for nature to join in.

In this trough one of the many garden hybrid *Dactylorhiza* that seed around is growing up

through other plants as they always seem to do.



This picture shows you this is a well-established plant of **Geranium sanguineum** but we need to see a picture of the wider scene to learn more about the context.



It is indeed growing about ten metres away from the Potentilla and Dactylorhiza in yet another variation of habitat.



So when you are taking pictures of plants in addition to getting the close up details be sure to also capture the surrounding habitat showing the plants in context.



This picture shows that the *Geranium sanguineum* is this time one of those growing in our front drive. Now the *Phyteuma spicatum* have finished flowering the *Geranium sanguineum* becomes the dominant plant in the driveway plantings and they will continue to put on a colourful show all through the summer months.



The same plants as I saw at the seaside, including *Geranium sanguineum* and *Dactylorhiza*, grow in a natural way in our driveway plantings but once again it is the wider view shown below to that tells the whole story of where this picture was taken.



I originally scattered some *Geranium* seed in the drive way then some *Dactylorhiza* seed must have blown in from plants elsewhere in the garden to form these clumps.

My love for the wild flowers and habitats I see is a constant source of inspiration, persistently informing what we do in the garden.

We already have some

Leucanthemum vulgare growing but this picture shows we do not have nearly enough - we could easily accommodate more.

Nature shows me how important the

relationship between plants growing together is to their success where they grow in support of rather than competition with each other. Following this principle I will work to encourage more *Leucanthemum vulgare* which will grow and flower at this time of year fitting in perfectly with our sequential plantings by utilising the same space as the wide range of bulbs and early flowering plants which are now lying dormant under the ground.



There are can be few more eye catching images than the white daisy flowers of **Leucanthemum vulgare** among some grasses pictured against the clear blue sky.



We have other white daisy flowers in the garden that come from much further afield such as **Celmisia spectabilis**.



A policy of tolerance and acceptance of plants in the garden allows us to let certain wildflowers such as **Lapsana communis** to seed around where we can enjoy the clusters of small yellow flowers on top of tall slender stems. Being shallow rooting they are easily removed as the flowers go past if you don't want them all to seed.



We are also enjoying the last of this year's flowers on **Mecopopsis baileyi** which we also encourage to seed around.



Spires are built to catch our attention and impress, such as the tower of the Aberdeen Townhouse standing out on the skyline. I took these pictures from the spot at the harbour mouth where I was picturing the wild flowers



Turning slightly east I can frame the spires of the Citadel and Marischal College which is a part of the second University to be founded in Aberdeen, this one in 1593 the first, King's College, was founded in 1495 - they merged into one in 1860.



This group of **Digitalis purpurea**, growing in the wild field up the road, show that some plants use the spire method of standing tall, the better to attract the attention of pollinators. Falling from a tall stem also helps ripe seed to disperse that bit further.

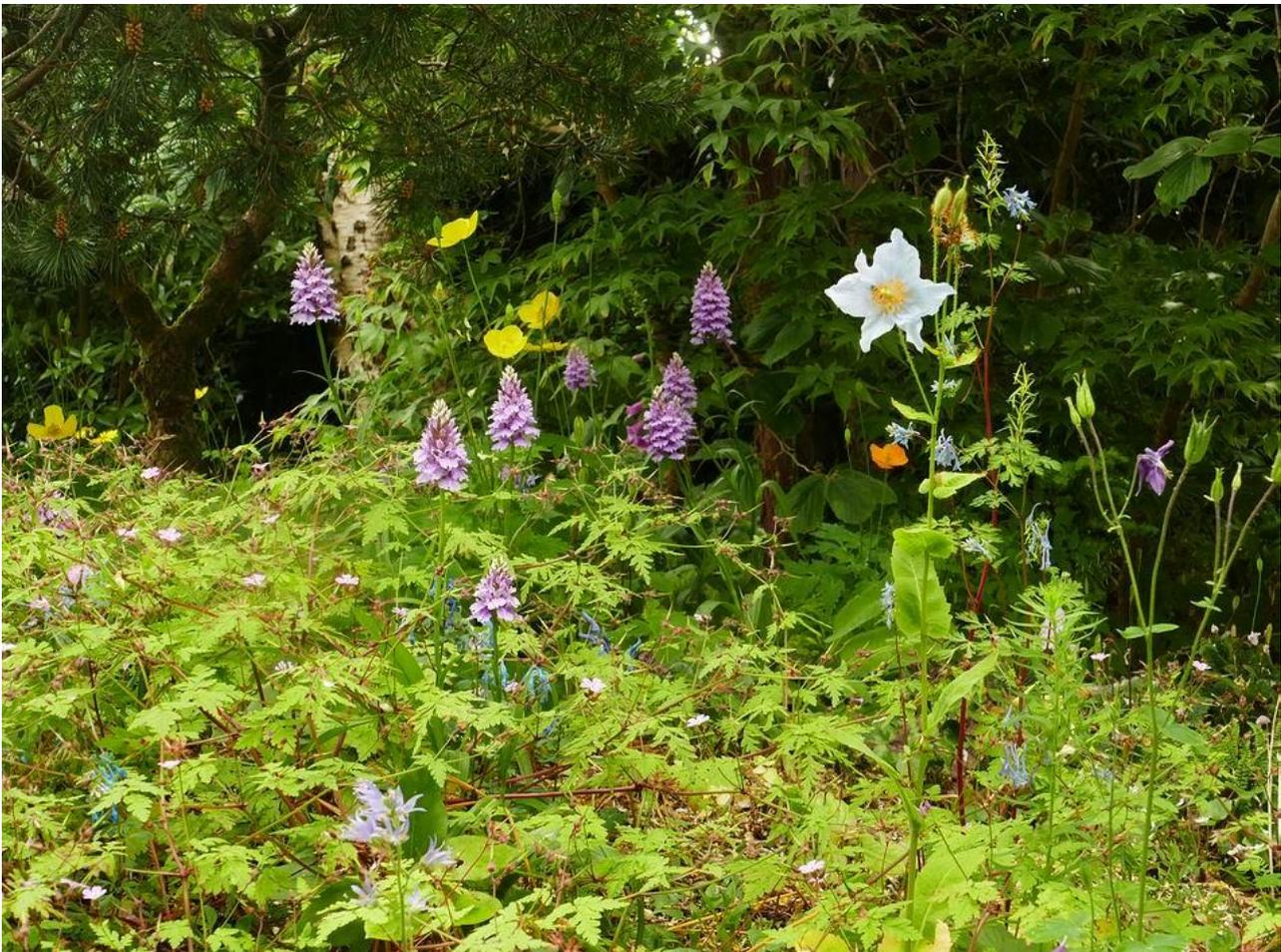


Digitalis purpurea

Flying along the bees and insects are attracted up into the warmth of the flowers where they can feed on pollen and nectar in relative safety.



We welcome the tall flowering spires of **Digitalis purpurea** in the garden although we do exercise some control by cutting back the flowering stem to just below the last flowers as they fade which prevents them setting seed and encourages secondary flowering growths to develop from the leaf axils. I don't know if they have picked up some hybridity but some of the plants we cut back do not die after flowering but have grown on for a number of years.



Dactylorhiza also have stems that push their flowers upwards so they stand above the competition.

Despite the fact that in recent years we have lost a lot of *Dactylorhiza* to the black fungal/bacterial diseases that go around we still have plenty. I am of the belief and hope that because all our plants are from garden seed that through the process of natural selection each subsequent generation will have an increased resistance to these diseases.



Many of the *Dactylorhiza* seedlings appear growing through other plants in the troughs where they put on a similar display as the *Digitalis*, only on a smaller scale.



We always let some of the Digitalis seed - often favouring those with paler flowers because they stand out more: like this one that seeded among the troughs we chose to leave which has white buds turning pale pink as they open.



Dactylorhiza



This trough brings me back to nature and the very first troughs we ever made were planted with Scottish wild flowers so while we have many troughs with alpine type landscapes and plants I keep at least this one 'wild'.





This picture is not for the yellow poppy but the less showy **Corydalis mairei** in flower and seed in front of it.



Corydalis mairei has grown in the garden since we first introduced it over twenty years ago but it is constantly on the move. The plants mostly die after flowering but they always leave plenty of seed which I have spread around so we have it seeding around in several areas but it chooses where it wants to grow. With small purple-blue flowers it is not the showiest of plants but the effect when the red wiry stems topped by flowers and bright green seed pods are lit from behind brings them alive.

If ever you need to know why I have been so fascinated and had a lifelong relationship with plants since I was a boy it can be summed up by seeing how the beautiful **Cakile maritima**, which this picture shows is growing in sea sand in the upper tidal zone – wow!



I do take detailed plant portraits but I think the wider pictures showing the relationship of plants with each other and the gardener are the ones that tell more of a story.....