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Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 30.....27th July 2022





The full title and description, when I started the Bulb Log Diary twenty years ago, stated that the content is a personal diary covering all aspects of the bulbs we grow both under glass and in the open garden as well as any other garden projects that I may be working on. Over the years it has matured, as I have, with the subjects covered extending out beyond the garden to natural places from as far afield as Alaska to New Zealand – in fact it covers anything to do with nature in and outside the garden that has spurred my interest during the week. One of this week's big excitements came one morning while sitting having breakfast I spotted a Red Squirrel at one of the bird feeders. I quickly grabbed my camera to capture a few fuzzy pictures through the window but before I could creep outside the squirrel had given up trying to get the sunflower hearts, disappearing up into the trees. This is only the second time I have seen a Red Squirrel in the garden although I suspect they are here more often than that. Due to a program of controlling the Grey Squirrels around Aberdeen there are increasing numbers of Reds in the area so I am delighted that with all our trees they find our garden attractive. A squirrel feeder is on the list.



While out on my walks I am always looking at the trees as I pass the remains of this Elm regularly I have been watching this type of bracket fungus growing steadily.

From the pictures below you can see that the tree died back as Dutch Elm Disease spread north.

There is wire mesh round the base of a few trees close to a ruined cottage – I don't know why.

I am interested to see new healthy looking growth emerging from the base of the tree (see below) and wonder if this is just part of a slow death or if the tree could regenerate.



The Elm tree (*Ulmus procera*) has healthy looking growth coming from around the base: see also below.



There are a number of Elm tree seedlings appearing including one perfectly healthy 10 to 15 year old specimen so I have hope that a resilient population may evolve to grow into the future.



Sadly I am also seeing some die back among the Ash trees (**Fraxinus excelsior**) in the area but there are some, such as the example above, that still look to be healthy.



The Beech trees (**Fagus sylvatica**) are looking very healthy and are heavy with nuts to feed help feed the local wild life including the growing Red Squirrel population.



I forage around these wooded and wild areas where there is a mass flowering on the Brambles (**Rubus fruticosus**) including some with pink flowers so I look forward to harvesting a good crop of fruits in a few months' time.



While I am waiting for the fruits on the Brambles to develop and ripen there are plenty of ripe wild Raspberries (**Rubus idaeus**) growing around the same area.



The wild Raspberries are much smaller than the cultivated forms but they are even more delicious.



As I come back to the garden I see there is a good crop of fruits on the various Sorbus in the front garden.

This picture of the front garden may give the impression that I got carried away with my obsession for trees but it is not as dense a barrier as it looks with views into the interior as you walk past.

The tallest tree is a fastigate form of the Scots pine (***Pinus sylvestris***) much loved by our resident Gold Crests, with a smaller ***Pinus aristata*** to the right. Other trees include Acer and Sorbus with many shrubs growing below.



Pinus aristata



Acer griseum is a great tree for the smaller garden- its cinnamon coloured peeling bark delivers year round decoration with the leaves adding a light green canopy turning bright orange just before the autumn drop.



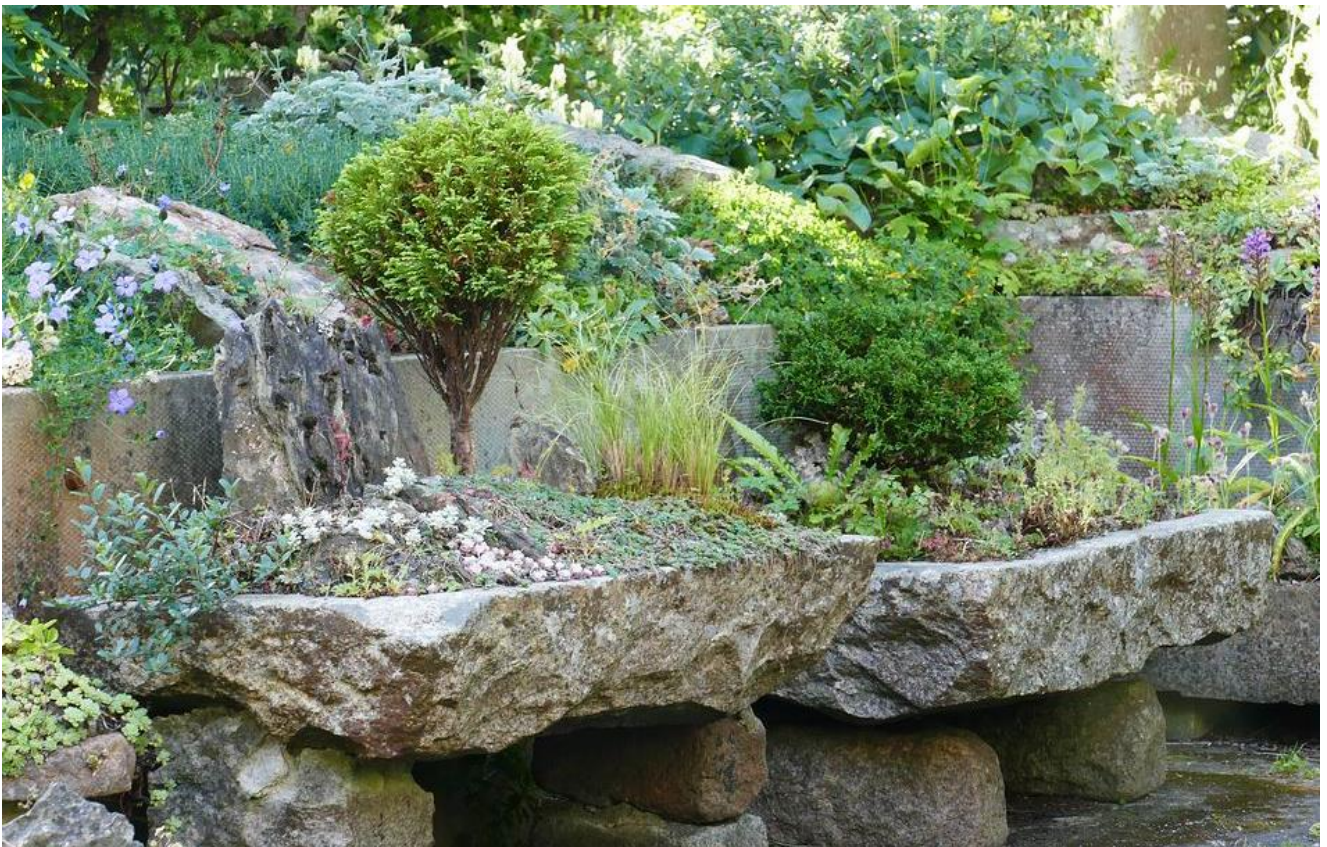
Lilium lankongense is among the flowers that I spot in the front garden.



Trees are one of the most important elements of a garden design. They bring structure, character and habitat and of course their benefits include attracting the wild life such as the Red Squirrel along with many birds.



Trees are becoming more appreciated as people realise the benefit they bring to our gardens and towns where in addition to all the wild life they support, the shade of their canopy helps keep our environment cool in these warming times, plus they capture carbon.



Trees can come in many sizes by selection as well as by pruning. The dwarf conifers in these two troughs are selected as compact forms but have been further restricted in growth by the restriction of the roots along with regular heavy pruning plus routine pinching back of the new growth while it is still soft, to keep them in scale.



To say I grow bonsai is a bit of a push but we do have a lot of trees growing in pots and those that we have are the ones that can survive on neglect. This Yew started as a horizontal form of dwarf yew - which when it outgrew the bed we lifted it, cut it back then trained the roots so it could be planted upright with the intention of creating a good looking bonsai. It has been neglected until a few years ago when I started to look after it better to encourage it to bud back so hopefully I can grow a more attractive structure of foliage.



These two Bonsai sit in more prominent places so I have paid more attention to them and I think they are quite good.



Not a bonsai as such but this **Pinus nigra** which has been grown in a pot for over forty years – it has been in this, its second pot, for around thirty of those. Pines are good in pots because they very tolerant of being dry.



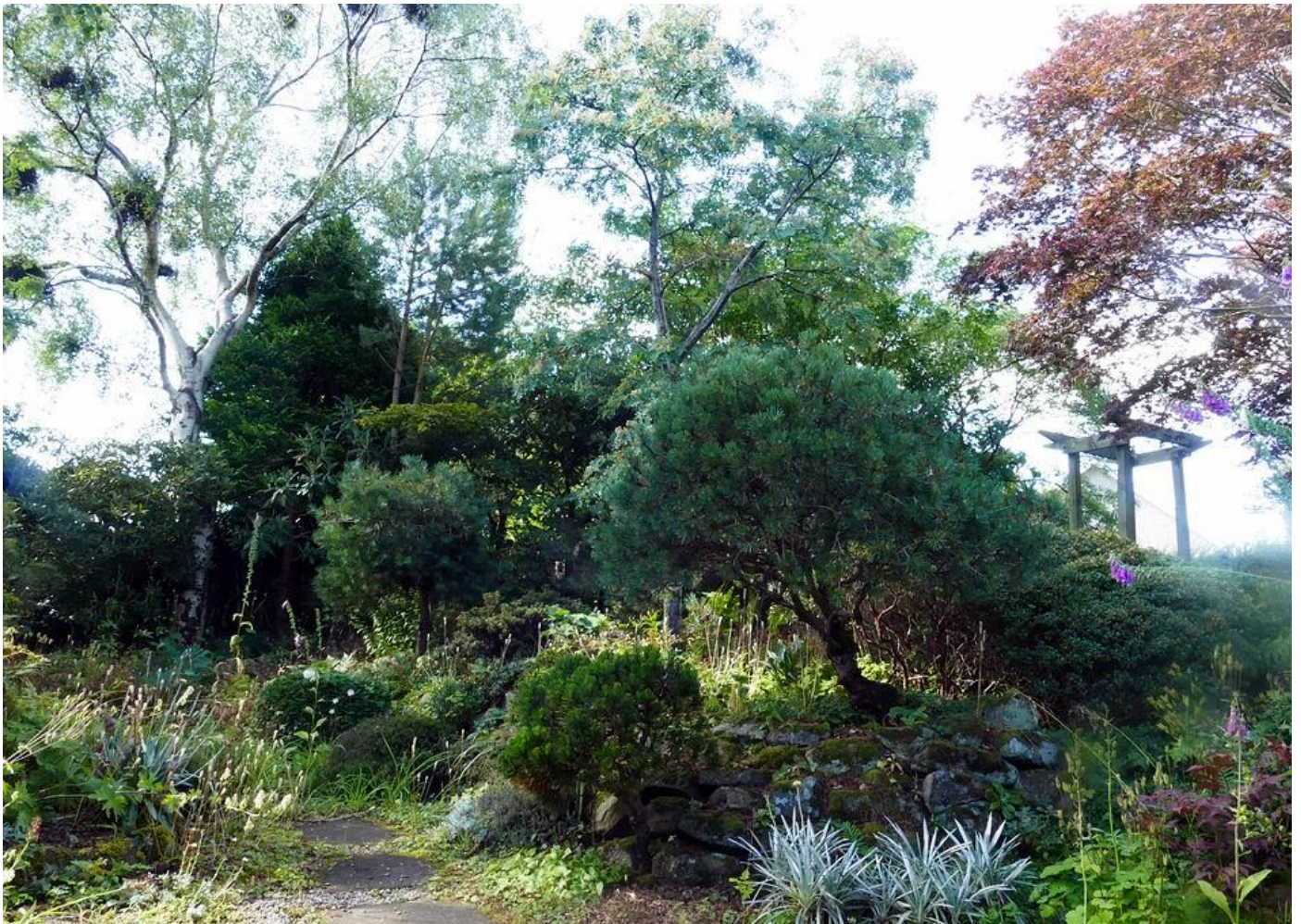
A shaft of sunlight briefly picked out this colourful combination highlighting the pink Mutisia against the purple Linaria.



It will soon be time for the Pieris to get a good trim – you can cut it back hard - right down to the bare trunk and it will come again. We like to keep the structure open so we can see the lovely old trunk and branches but wait until we have enjoyed the colourful display as the leaves go from bright red through cream to green; then we cut it back.

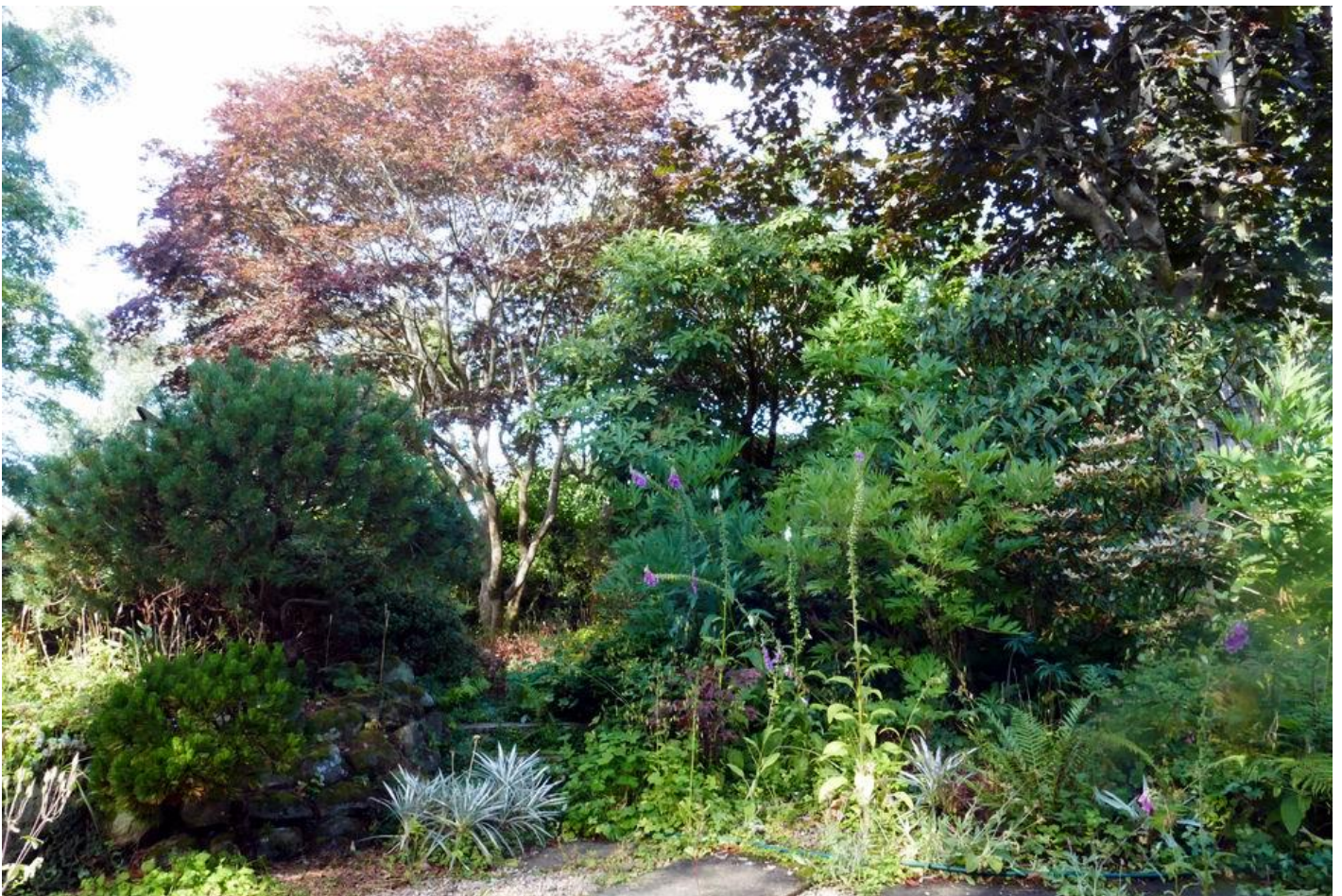


We have a mixture of conifers and deciduous trees giving the garden a year round structure through the winter with the evergreens - then the atmosphere changes completely when the deciduous canopy comes in.

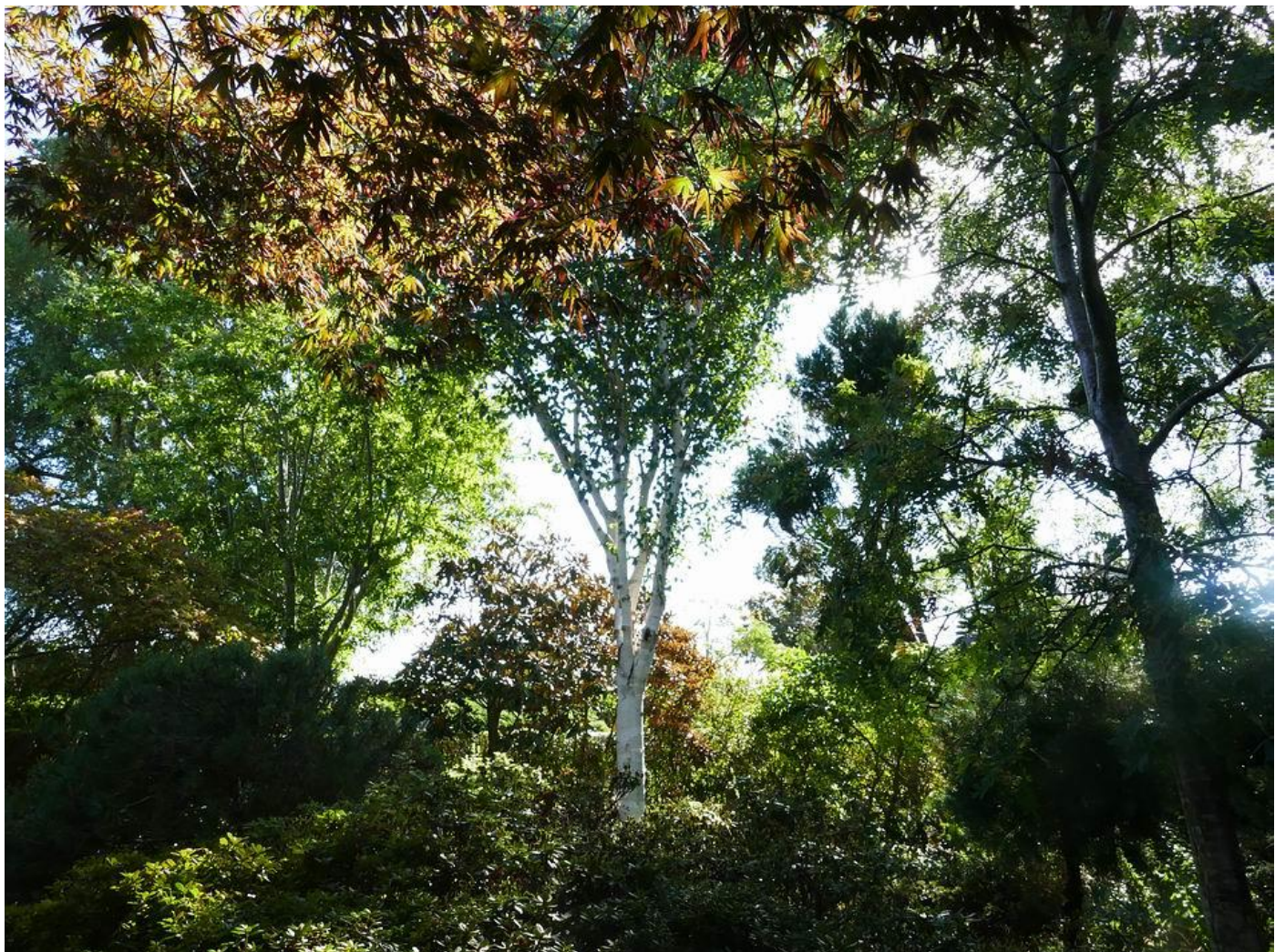




The trees and shrubs are vital to the garden. In spring early bulbs and plants bring great colour and interest from February through May then depending on our weather they retreat underground in June so by July the only evidence left is their dried seed stems, a few still clutching some of their valuable contents. This is the time of year when I cut the hedges and do some summer pruning so the fact that so many of our plants are underground means I can get access without fear of damaging the plants. Then by late August when everything is cut and cleared away the autumn flowering bulbs will start to flower.



Red leaved Acers bring additional colour to the leaf canopy.



View towards the white birch, ***Betula utilis jacquemontii***.



The pond is surrounded by a number of trees in pots that could, under better management, become good bonsai but they survive and bring us pleasure. The small one on the left is *Lonicera nitida* a great easy subject for bonsai.



Lonicera nitida makes up part of our hedges and so it can be cut back really hard and it will always come again. It is a member of the honeysuckle family which if allowed to flower will produce lovely shiny violet berries. This plant self-seeded in the gravel between some of the troughs. For a few years I just cut it back then two years ago I pulled it out and found it had grown a rather nice trunk so I planted it in this bonsai pot. Because it buds back so well and grows fast you can form it into an interesting shape and the small evergreen leaves are perfectly in scale for a bonsai. If you want to start with bonsai I can recommend this as an easy forgiving subject that will allow you to experiment with forming and shaping a bonsai tree.



I have always been attracted to and fascinated by amber, the fossilised tree resin, especially the specimens that contain insects from a hundred million years ago.

I pass an old Prunus planted as a street tree whose trunk is distorted by disease which oozes resin that turns hard when it is exposed to the air.



The resin forms into different shapes and sizes depending on the size of the wound here it is like squeezing sticky liquid from a tube.



Although not fossilised I cannot resist collecting some of the amber coloured tree resin as it hardens and can be broken off and it displays a similar range of colours to the Baltic amber that I so admire.



I can definitely be described as a tree hugger and the amber is just another reason for me to love looking at, appreciating the value of, and wanting to grow trees.
You can search through the topics and plants I have previously written about using the excellent [Bulb Log Index](#) currently compiled by Tristan Hatton-Ellis by clicking the link.....