



BULB LOG 31.....3rd August 2022





Hedge cutting and shredding continue to occupy me in the garden but I took time to pick a selection of flowers, most of which are small, to use for this week's cover picture. Images like this remind me that while there may not appear to be many plants in flower in the garden just now, when you start to look carefully, there is quite a range of colour to be found. It is not quite all the flowers I saw because some, like the first of this seasons **Cyclamen purpurascens** flowers, are simply too few and precious to pick as I have seed production in mind.



The appearance of *Cyclamen purpurascens* acts to remind me that autumn is not so far away and its flowers often overlap with plants like **Origanum majorana** that seeds around flowering in what passes as high summer in Aberdeen. Its clusters of small flowers attract a steady stream of several species of bees.



Two more flowers that did not make the cover are on this page, first the bright red **Tropaeolum speciosum**.



Philesia magellanica

I love the shiny red clusters of berries on **Actea rubra** that I have seen growing in the wild by a river in Alaska some years ago. As I don't want to have to weed out excessive number of seedlings next year I will enjoy the colourful display for a while but will remove the berries before they start dropping and shedding their seeds.



South Africa, Asia and North America are represented in this small grouping of plants: *Eucomis tricolor*, *Roscoeae humeana* and *Trillium luteum*.



The heavy rain we had last night brings the plants some relief from the dry conditions and they respond to the moisture by sitting up again. No amount of me watering can have the same benefit as a few hours' worth of rain.



Unfortunately the rain came too late for this *Podophyllum peltatum* whose leaves have gone prematurely brown however the previously floppy stems have become turgid again holding the brown leaves up above the *Actaea*.



Seen against the light I can see that a few of the *Erythronium* seedpods are still holding on to some seed.



On my walk I find *Cicerbita macrophylla* known as the **Blue Sow Thistle** not to be confused with the similar looking *Cichorium intybus* (Chicory) which holds its bluer flowers closer to the stem.



Cicerbita macrophylla has thistle like down attached to the seeds which fly away to be dispersed by the wind.



Summer is the season when the thistles are in bloom: the flower has been adopted as the national flower of Scotland. I am not sure if anyone knows why but the thistle first appears as a royal symbol on silver coins issued by James III in 1470. Then there is the question of which of the many thistles is it? I think that the flower most represented looks like **Cirsium vulgare**, the **Spear Thistle**.





Cirsium vulgare

I wanted to capture this emblem of Scotland in a more dramatic way than in the two previous pictures – here is my effort captured using my compact camera showing the thistle with banded snails, grasses and looming clouds.



We do some selective weeding in the crevices between the paving slabs allowing some of the plants that seed in, such as **Potentilla pulvinaris** and **Erinus alpinus**, to grow.



I get increasingly more tolerant of the so called weeds, such as this small **Myosotis (Forget Me Not)**. In many cases if we look carefully they are equally as interesting and decorative as many of the more demanding plants that we strive to acquire and grow.



The artist in me is always looking at patterns, shapes and colours such as the striking leaves of **Impatiens omeiana** that before the rain were stilling limp but are now held up proudly having been revived by the rain



Getting in close you will find there are patterns within patterns: in fact isolating increasingly smaller areas like this is a form of looking at the abstract.



Have you ever looked close enough to see the small hooks along the edges of the leaves? The more you look at nature the more fascinating it becomes. Images like this where you lose the overall form become abstract and as an artist that interest me. In addition to the Dürer I showed a few weeks ago my favourite paintings representing plants and gardens, are towards the abstract by such diverse artists as Monet, especially his late Water Lily series, to the equally monumental works of Anselm Kiefer.



Nature is full of abstraction to inspire us where we can select and record it with a camera.



The bark pattern on one of our Acer trees is temporally enhanced while it is raining by the drips of water running down creating darker lines.



Changing the orientation of the image can increase the abstraction.



I can even find enough interest in these dried crocus and colchicum leaves lying on one of the sand plunges to take a series of digital images for future reference.



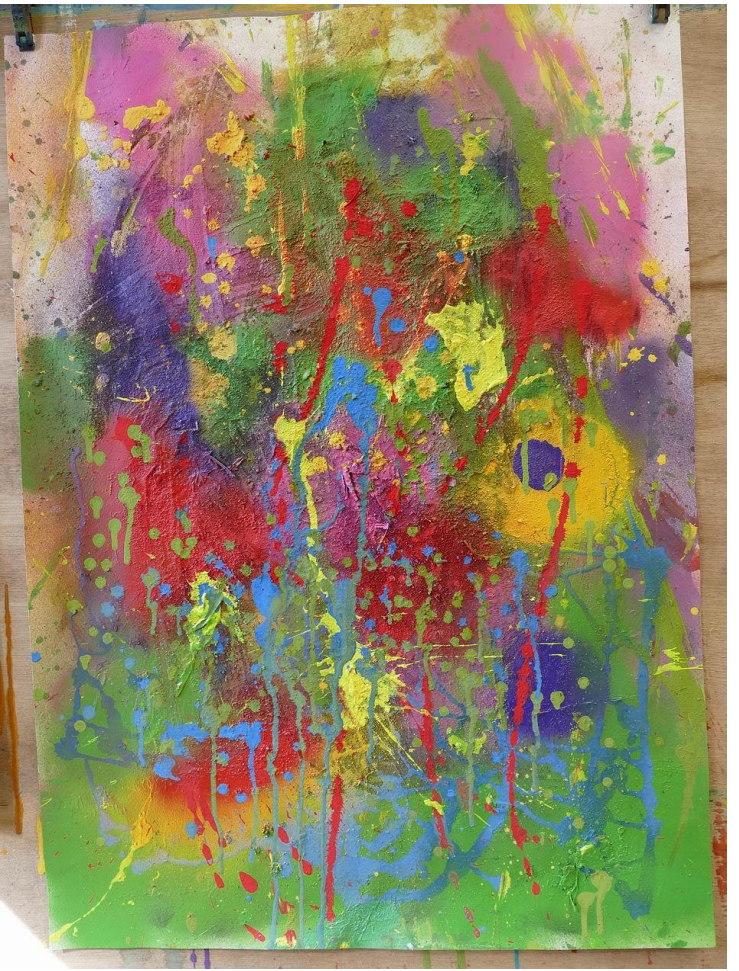
While taking these pictures I spotted that the foraging birds had disturbed some of the **Dicentra cucularia** bulbs which grow and flower best when they are lying just below the surface. Plant them too deep and they will not flower for a few years as they gradually grow their way towards the surface.



I am fascinated by how we see and look at scenes like this chaos of colours, shapes and forms that such a mass of plant growth creates which in turn inspires my art.



In this mixed media drawing on hand made paper I try make your eyes dart around focusing in on different areas or details. In just the same way as they do when you are in front of the actual scene or in the previous photograph you can never focus in on the whole work at the same time.



Under normal conditions a camera captures a view in an instant of time but when painting or drawing you can view through time. This series of abstract paintings have many layers built up slowly through several weeks. They start with a textured ground where sand, soil, or even seeds and bits of plants are adhered to the surface representing the ground in winter, then I add all the colourful season of plants which I choose not to paint in any detail but try and interpret what I feel when looking at a colourful border or wild flower meadow viewed through time only hinting at the original source of inspiration.



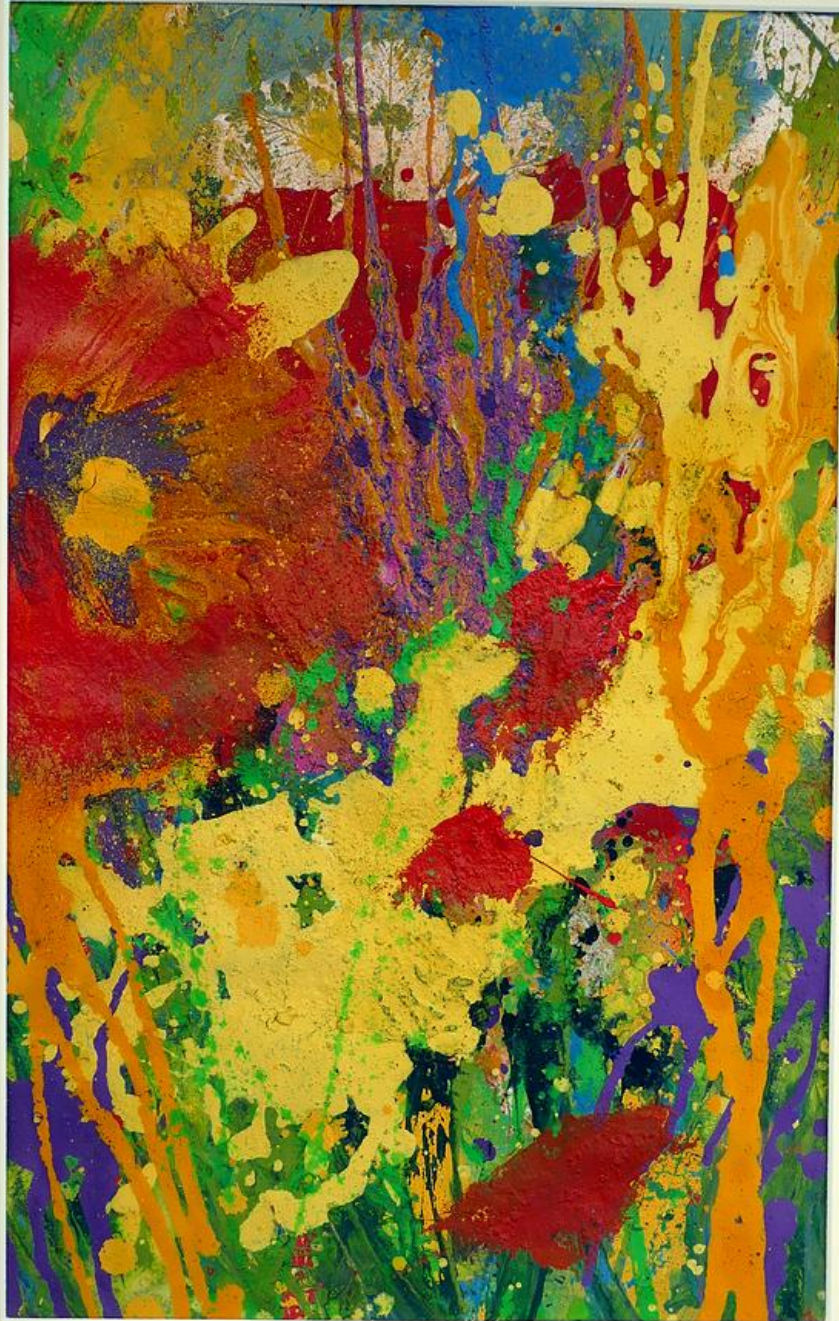
This work is far from finished - I showed the early stage (above left) a few weeks ago which has now had more layers added (above right) and it will take some time to complete. As the paint can take some time to dry I often work on two or three works at a time. You really need to be in front of these works to get the full experience but his detail gives some idea of the thick rich layers of texture.



Abstract means relating to or denoting art that does not attempt to represent external reality, but rather seeks to achieve its effect using shapes, colours, and textures.

With a garden you start with the ground working with sand, soil, humus before adding seeds and plants and through time you continue to add more plants. During the season these plants grow, flower, then produce seeds before they die back again and that is the process I follow in this series of paintings. As stated above I start by adding textures to the ground then gradually build up layers each one influencing where the shapes and colours of the subsequent layers go which sometimes cover previous layers leaving only a trace of their presence. A garden is never finished; it continues to grow constantly changing and deciding when a painting is finished is often the hardest bit and if they are lying around I am always tempted to add more to them but once they are framed there is less of a temptation for me to work on them.

Although I often refer to botanical detail that is not what I am trying to capture these are an expression of being among plants and flowers and I hope when looking at them they suggest that feeling of looking into a colourful border, the more you look into them (border or paintings) the more you will see.



Gardening itself is an artistic process but I share these images to try and encourage more of you the get creative and lay down your impressions of plants and gardens utilising drawing, painting or whatever medium you want.....