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Bulb Log Diary

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Pictures and text © Ian Young

BULB LOG 12.....17th December 2025





Here we are again at the final Bulb Log of the year. How did that happen? [‘Who knows where the time goes’?](#)

As I look back at this year it is the changing weather that seems to be foremost. The plants also mark the passing of the seasons, but they do it in a different way. While we moan about how things are not as ‘normal’ the plants just react to the conditions that they are experiencing. I see the fat flower buds forming on the Rhododendrons, holding next spring’s flowers, and think of the fat bulbs underground doing a similar thing. But the buds

on this **Rhododendron pachysanthum** have been fooled by the weather into opening its flowers prematurely. We often get the occasional late season flowers opening on Rhododendrons, most commonly on the small leaved ones, but I have never seen so many out of season flowers opening on the larger leaved ones like this. Interestingly it is only the buds on the north side of the plant that are revealing their flowers.



Rhododendron pachysanthum flowers on the North side of the plant are open.



While those on the south side of the plant remain tightly shut distracted by the neatly notched leaves chewed by vine weevils.



Typically, the flowers were tempted out by the unusually mild conditions we have experienced this autumn just in time to be hit by our first cold spell of winter which delivered 20cms of snow and temperatures down to -6C.



The flowers were destroyed by the frosts transforming them into looking like used teabags. It will take some eighteen months of growth before this side of the plant flowers again - fortunately we will see the flowers on the opposite side next spring. It is trying to figure out what exactly triggers plants to react in such ways that keeps me involved in growing plants.



The buds on different species of Rhododendron are as individual as their flowers or leaves. Here I will share a small selection starting with **Rhododendron thomsonii**.



Rhododendron orbiculare



Rhododendron uvariifolium



Rhododendron decorum



The Chilean plant **Crinodendron hookerianum** is fascinating in the way its buds develop. They are not held in a tight bulbous shape but on its pedicel hanging down from the stems and start to appear soon after the normal flowering period in the spring.

I have completed the annual task of cutting back the old growth on the driveways. Previously I have been on my hands and knees for hours with a pair of sheep shears, snipping the dead stems, mostly of the *Geranium sanguineum*, to clear the way for the early bulbs. This year I had the idea to use a battery driven hedge trimmer which worked perfectly clearing the drive in minutes rather than hours. When the weather dries up, I will give it a final clean.



The cover picture shows the *Narcissus* in one of the bulb house sand beds where the flowers always open well before the same clones do when growing in pots. Another of the plant worlds mysteries for me to puzzle over.



As always it is the *Bulbocodium* group (Hoop Petticoat) that flower all through the winter sometimes starting as early as October. This year they have been a bit later than - I am hesitating to use the common term, normal because I don't know what normal is so - let's say later than in most years,



I have written many times about this charming group that interbreed to produce a wonderful selection of plants that involve *Narcissus albidus*, *bulbocodium*, *cantabricus* and *romieuxii* among others.



There are further flowers every day with plenty more buds at various stages still to come. At the back you can see the growth of **Tropaeolum azureum** scrambling up the sticks and back wall.





I love the close proximity of the different colours and forms that arise when they are growing randomly in the sand over the clonal groups growing in pots.



In the pots the first flowers are now opening with plenty of buds still to come through the winter season. It is essential that they have sufficient water to allow them to grow well with regular watering in mild conditions.



We gardeners should never turn our backs on the common native plants such as **Hedra helix, (Common Ivy)**. It produces both flowers and fruits all through the winter providing food and shelter for a host of native wildlife.



I have never seen Ivy flowering so freely before all around the area as well as here in the garden where it is allowed to grow up the southern boundary wall. Care needs to be taken to ensure that it does not take over completely but it is easy to cut back where it starts to creep along the ground or towards trees and shrubs – it is not a difficult task it just takes time. The birds eat the seed and spread it around the garden so I do watch for the seedlings, which are very easily identified as Ivy, and remove them.



Where you have Ivy you are also likely to get the semi-parasitic **Orobanche hederace** (Broomrape) which has appeared very late this year.



I received a number of complimentary comments about the pictures showing the many trees and shrubs in their autumn colours last month. Now the leaves have fallen they become more important to the structure of the garden



This Pieris is one of the oldest plants in the garden growing here since 1974, the conifer in the background arrived not much after that. To prevent the Pieris from developing into a massive sprawling bush I routinely prune and cut it back keeping the attractive trunk visible.



These scenes appear regularly in the Bulb Log - usually to highlight the ever-changing colours on display from seasonal sequences of bulbs that grow across these beds. It is important that they retain some structure during the winter.





The recent frost and snow have finally pushed the *Cyananthus lobatus* hybrid's growth back. The great mat of trailing stems has now become detached as the plant retreats underground until the spring. This makes it easy to just lift off the tangled mat to open up this end of the bed giving light and air to the bulbs also growing here.



The mat now gone I can see the shoots already poking through the gravel.



Shoots appearing



The woods that I walk to most days are also in their winter state. The trees, now bare of foliage, reveal their beautiful structures complete with the scars of the limbs torn off in the many recent storms that we seem to be getting more regularly.



Even in the woods I see the shoots of bulbs pushing through the leaf debris. These are Daffodils that have survived and spread around the woods and fields - growing wild since the 1960's when they were last cultivated here.

I have written an article, 'The adventures of the Weedy Gardener' showing some of the many wild and naturalised flowers I see on my daily walks. It features in this month's

[International Rock Gardener \(IRG\)](#),

Click the link to read all 65 pages.



All around the garden there are positive signs that new growth is on its way for next year such as these seedling Cyclamen clustered around the parent plant.



With my spirit lifted by the Narcissus flowers and all the shoots just poking through in the garden along with the encouragement I received I have decided that there is more to share with you so I will continue writing next year.

Thank you to everyone who contacted me: sometimes I need that reassurance that the Bulb Log is still relevant and appreciated.

In line with recent years I have arranged all the cover images of 2025 below - they are

linked to the Logs so clicking on any of the pictures will take you to that issue of the Bulb Log.



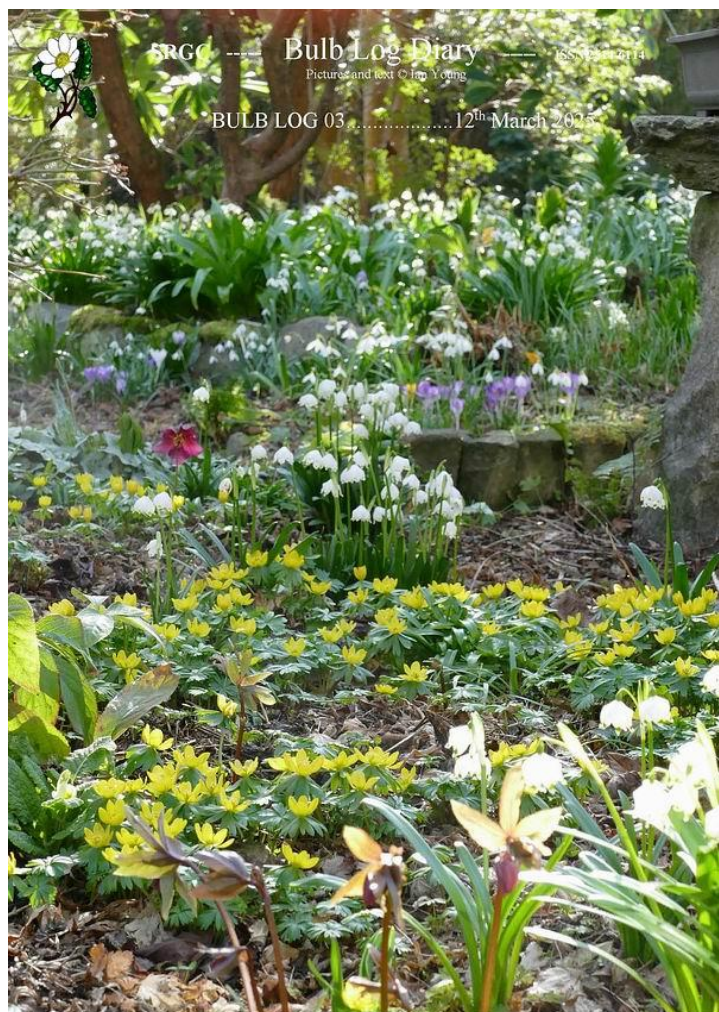
BULB LOG 01.....15th January 2025



BULB LOG 02.....19th February 2025



BULB LOG 03.....12th March 2025



BULB LOG 04.....16th April 2025





