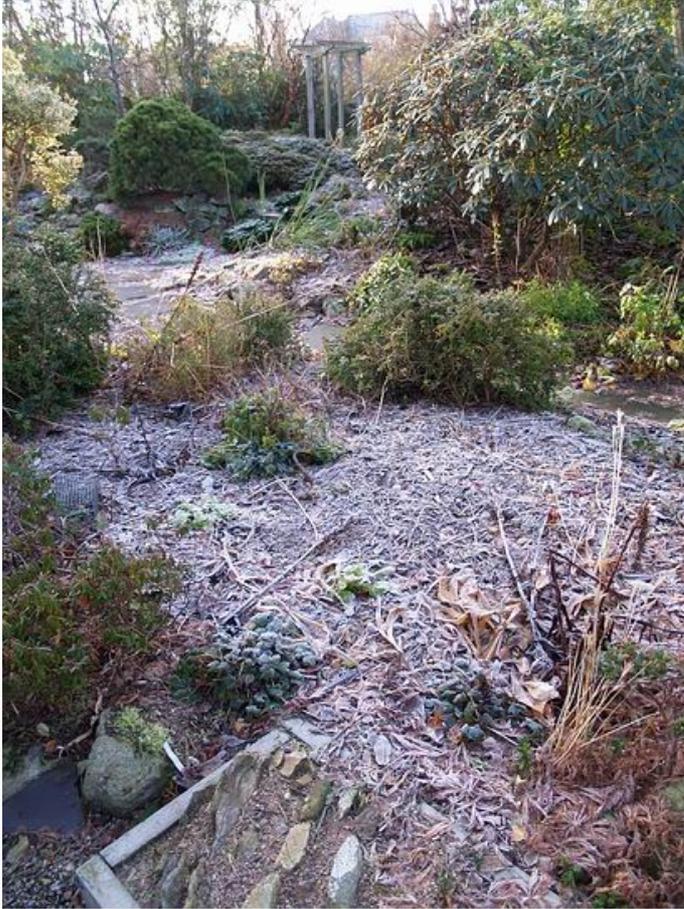




BULB LOG 48.....2nd December 2009

Frosty Morning



Although it was posted on the 2nd December I started to write this week's bulb log yesterday, 1st December. It was our wee dog Lily's, eleventh birthday and she had quite a cold walk, -5C, on this frosty morning.

I not only had to brave the cold to take Lily out but also to see what I might write about this week and also take the pictures.

There was still a hard frost at ten in the morning when I took most of these pictures as you will see from the ice crystals that have formed everywhere but it surprising what you will find if you look.

Below is a picture of the flowers on this Corydalis hybrid which have lain down as a reaction to the freezing temperatures but they will sit back up again when the frost lifts.

These are incredible plants and are seedlings from Corydalis 'Craigton Blue' .

I cannot remember a day since the first one flowered in the spring when we did not have one in flower somewhere in the garden.



Corydalis hybrid



Galanthus 'Hyde Lodge'

As I wondered round the garden checking to see what I might find my eye was drawn to a white flower under this fern -it is Galanthus 'Hyde Lodge'. Unfortunately the slugs have been feasting on the flowers so even if we get some milder weather and it opens its flowers it will never look its best in this chewed condition.



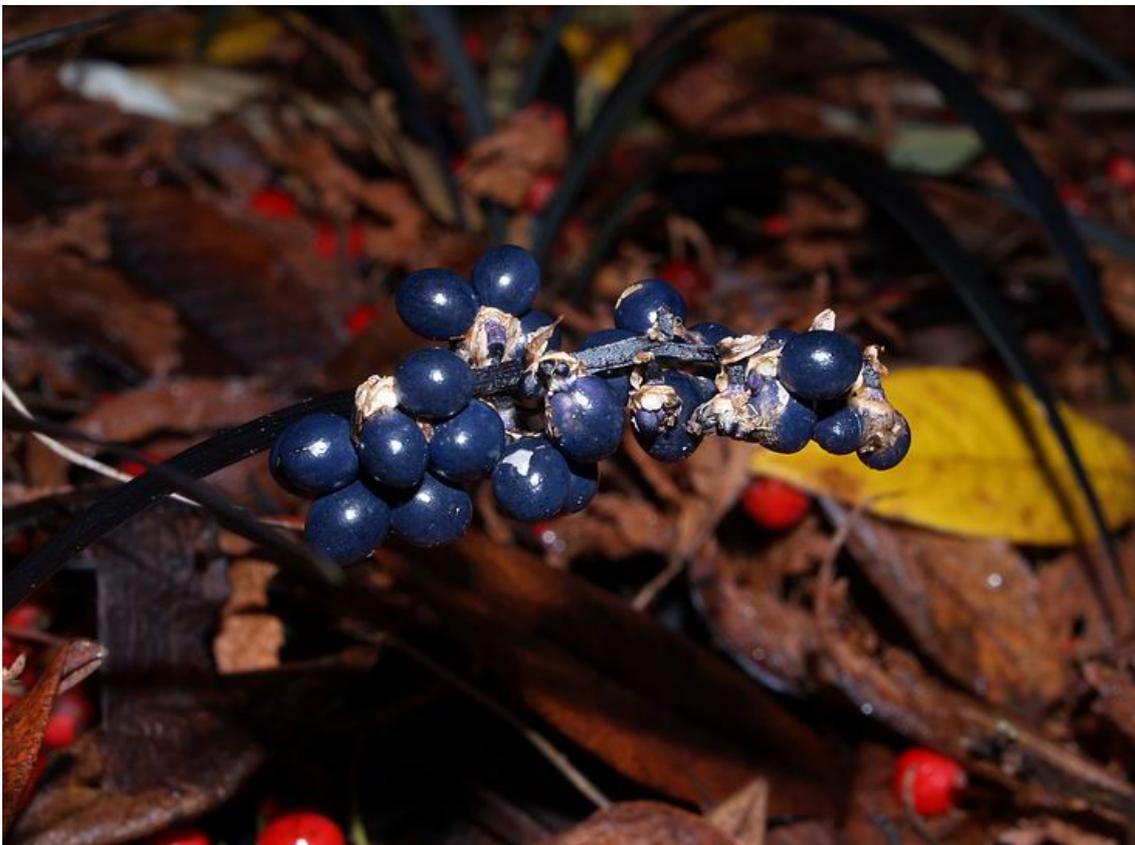
Galanthus nivalis

To my surprise and delight as I walked just around the corner at the other side of this bed my eye was again taken by a glint of white. Then my memory kicked in and I remembered that a kind friend had given us some Galanthus regina olgae to try when I said that we always struggled to get them to survive in our garden. So far these have done better than the others we have tried over the years, few of which ever came above the ground after being planted. I will keep my fingers crossed that these will settle down and increase now so we can have snowdrops in flowers before the turn of the year.



Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens'

Further round the garden the frost had not formed ice crystals on these plants because they are under the cover of some of our trees which just gives them that slight protection. This time it was not white that took my eye but the shiny blue-black fruits of *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens' which adds all year round interest as it quietly runs around at the edge of this bulb bed.



Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens' fruits

It can take a while to settle down when you first plant it but if it likes the conditions it will gradually increase by sending out short stolons. We have some areas in the deep shade under Rhododendrons where it has formed quite large carpets of its attractive black foliage producing attractive pinky purple flowers in the summer followed by these dark shiny fruits.



Frozen Cyclamen hederifolium leaves

Cyclamen is another genus whose leaves give us winter interest as they appear in the late summer into autumn then stay until they wither in the hot dry summer conditions. Except- this is Aberdeen and we do not get hot dry summers so some years the old leaves would hang on until the new ones emerge but I tend to cut them off when they start to look tatty around July/August. These leaves in the picture above are not tatty but frozen.



Ice crystals on Cyclamen leaves

All over the garden there are masses of Cyclamen leaves covered in beautiful ice crystals.



Frozen Cyclamen leaves

This group of leaves interested me more than most because it is of a silver leaved form of cyclamen hederifolium – you can just see a leaf to the left with silver showing.



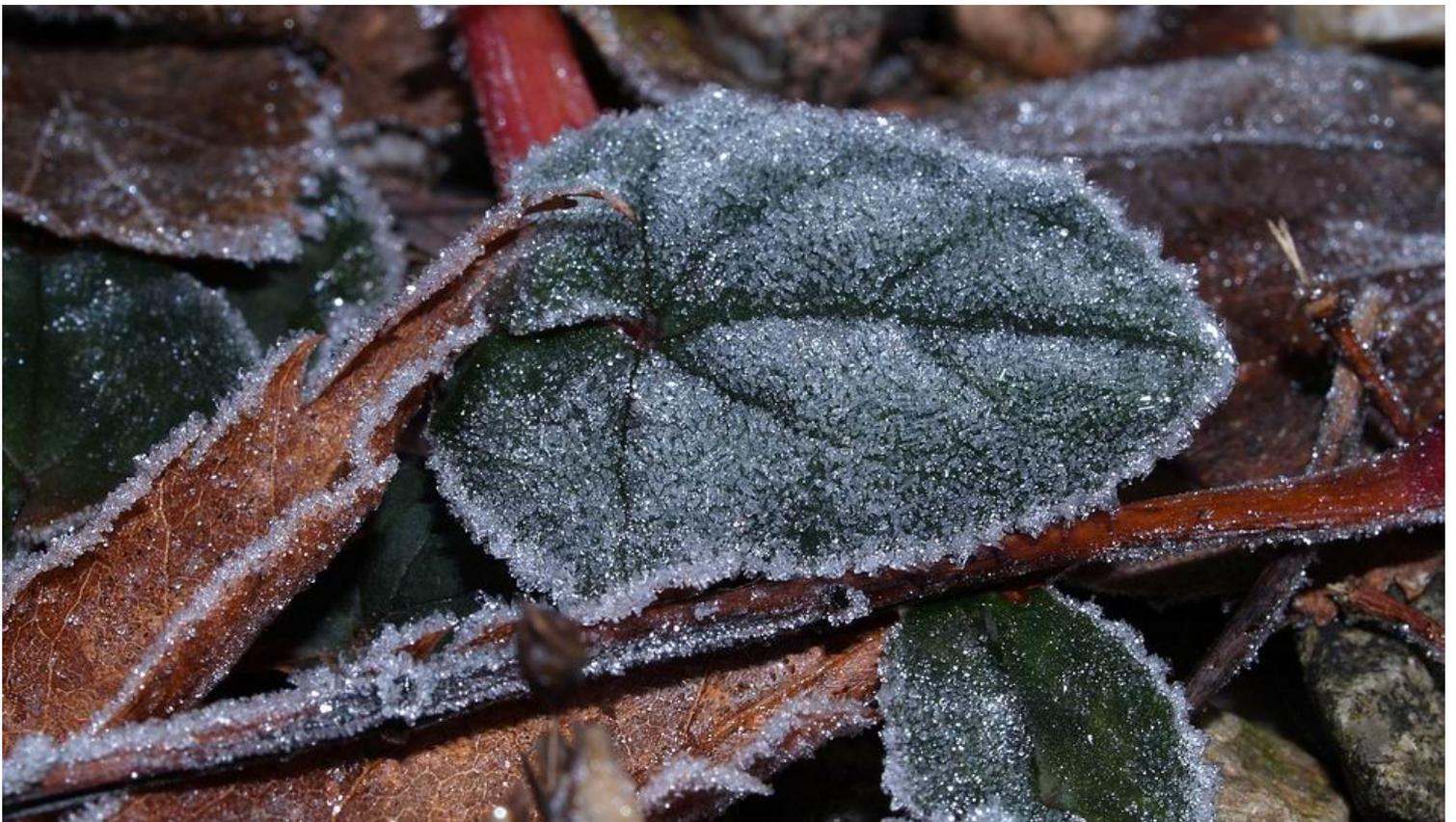
Frozen Cyclamen silver form leaves

Just compare this picture of the same plant with the picture below which was taken less than forty minutes later.



Cyclamen silver form leaves

Less than forty minutes after that picture above was taken the air temperature had risen enough to chase the frost away from these leaves and so the silver colour was restored. It is fascinating how the green comes through when they are frozen but then is pushed back by the silver in normal conditions.



Ice crystals on Cyclamen leaves

This leaf displays the opposite effect because it is only silver by the attractive addition of these ice crystals which when they melt will reveal the true colour of this green leaf.



Ice on the bulb house roof

There was a thick layer of ice on the bulb house roofs until the wind got up and a milder front moved over in the late morning – then it quickly disappeared. I should have waited until then to go out and take the pictures and I would not have got frozen fingers – but then neither would I have got all the pictures above. The message is to look at your garden every day in all conditions.



Cyclamen mirabile leaves

The protection of just an unheated glass-house is enough to prevent these cyclamen mirabile leaves from freezing even though the surface of the exposed sand plunge is frozen hard.

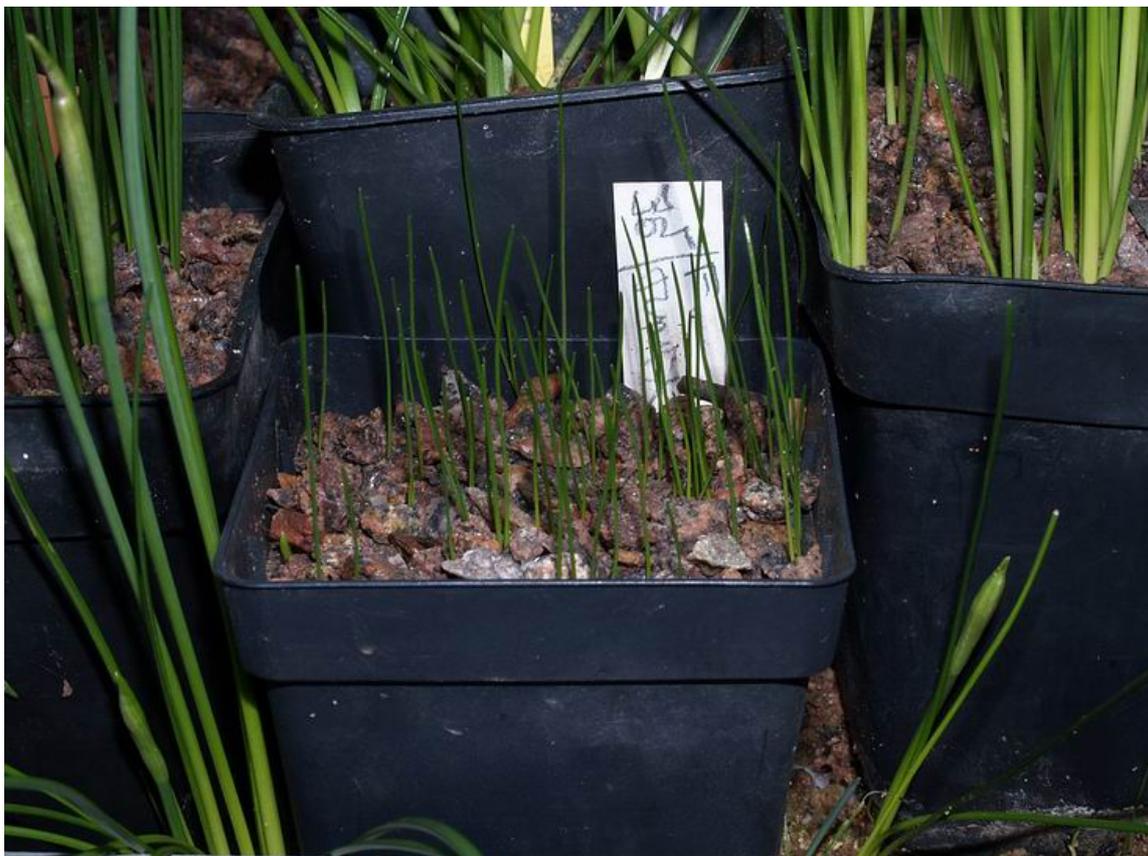
When I reported on my trough project in bulb log 46 I mentioned that I wanted to plant up a crevice type trough with bulbs. My problem has been to select suitable bulbs that will provide some interest all year round and not just when they are in flower. I must say that so often the answer is staring you in the face and you just do not realise it. The smaller leaved cyclamen are perfect as they keep their leaves for most of the year and should grow well in a trough with other small bulbs.



Cyclamen coum

This form of *Cyclamen coum* has very attractive and neat little leaves which, like *Cyclamen mirabile*, would be in perfect scale for a crevice trough. There leaves would give me some interest in the trough during the summer which was the period causing me concern as lacking in interest. I could plant some of the smaller *Crocus* and *Narcissus* species to provide further floral interest.

I will plant it up next summer when the bulbs are dormant – watch for the updates.



Narcissus seedlings

A fine crop of *Narcissus* seedlings have appeared in this pot at a germination rate I should be pleased with. The only problem is that I did not sow them. If you can make out the label- this is a pot of *Fritillaria* bulbs. There are two main reasons that this problem occurs. Firstly I did not collect the seeds before they were shed into the adjacent pots and secondly I did not get round to replotting about half of the bulbs last summer. I am always pleased to have bulbs growing from seeds and when they fall into a pot of *Fritillaria* or *Crocus* that is not a big problem as I can easily sort them out. Where it does become a big problem is when they fall into another pot of *Narcissus*. I will make sure that next summer I replot all the *Narcissus* pots and any small seedling bulbs will be removed and grown on separately so I do not contaminate my other *Narcissus* species with stray seedlings. It should be relatively easy to identify these stray seedling bulbs because apart from being small they will be very near the surface as they were not sown deeply as I prefer to do with *Narcissus* seeds.



Narcissus Seedlings

All the remaining pictures in this week's bulb log are of stray Narcissus seedlings that I have removed from other pots or have seeded into the sand plunge. They are all beautiful and must have *Narcissus romieuxii* and *Narcissus cantabricus* in their parentage and as some of the hybrids involving these species such as N. 'Camoro' are fertile, they could be anything from complicated hybrids to straight species. It is very difficult to understand the taxonomy of the hoop petticoat Narcissus with all their variation in the wild but when they are brought close together in cultivation it is almost impossible. A complete DNA study could give the answer but that is unlikely to happen with the wild species never mind all these crosses that are in our gardens.



Narcissus Seedlings

Each and every one of these Narcissus seedlings I am showing you is unique with its own charm and it is possible to see similarities in characteristics with some of the species so well described in my well thumbed copy of John Blanchard's book on Wild Daffodils. How good would it be if some one out there would write an updated version to taking into account the discoveries made since this book was written in 1990.

If I could make a book wish list it would be for a new revision of the Narcissus book, a good book on the Genus *Fritillaria* and an updated book on *Crocus*. Well, at least one of my wishes is going to be granted as Janis Ruksans is completing his work on his *Crocus* book to be published next August. I am eagerly awaiting this new title which I can reveal will feature completely new material and be right up to date including the naming of three new taxa. Janis tells me the Book will be something of E.A. Bowles *Crocus* handbook *style* but completely original. With a

foreward by Brian Mathew it will have chapters dealing with cultivation, Enemies of Crocus such as pests and disease, as well as an extensive look at the Genus including a new key for the species. I am sure that this work will sit well along side the other great works on Crocus by Bowles and Mathew. Keep space on your book shelves and some money in your pocket as this will be a must have book.



Narcissus Seedlings

Back to the Narcissus seedlings – this is a good strong yellow form.



Narcissus Seedlings

This one has creamy yellow buds that turn pure white as they open.



Narcissus Seedlings

These small pure white flowers have just a tiny green tip to the petals –they are held looking upwards and do not turn over.



Finally for this week this emerging flower is like a lady's expensive designer ball gown as it emerges from its bud.