



BULB LOG 38.....23<sup>rd</sup> September 2009



**Colchicum agrippinum**

Here we are back home from our trip down to Stratford on Avon where we helped around 100 Members of the AGS celebrate their 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. The first question I was asked after my talk was regarding the apparent lack of any evidence of slug or snail damage in the pictures I showed. My answer was of course we are bothered by them and many leaves are more than a little bit chewed like the Eucomis ones in the foreground. I do not like to use slug pellets but do admit that I do occasionally sprinkle them sparingly in the seed frames. While I am prepared to put up with holes chewed all over the mature leaves I cannot allow a slug or snail to eat off a whole pot of seedlings over night.



**Colchicum speciosum album**

The theme of the Anniversary Conference was woodland plants and what better way to brighten up an area at the base of a tree than to have a clump of Colchicum speciosum album. The flowers do not seem bothered by the shade and the leaves do not grow fully until the spring and by the time the tree comes back into leaf the Colchicum leaves will have played their part in feeding the bulbs.



**Cyclamen hederifolium**

Another good bulbous plant that will grow in shade is *Cyclamen hederifolium* and the silver leaved forms are especially good at standing out and getting noticed in the dappled light.



**Crocus in sand bed**

The sand bed that I built a few years ago is a good success as the majority of bulbils that I planted have now reached flowering size. In this picture you can see *Crocus nudiflorus*, *nudiflorus albus*, *banaticus*, *speciosus*, *speciosus ssp xantholaimos* and its hybrid with *C. pulchellus*.



***Crocus speciosus* ssp *xantholaimos***

I love the subspecies *xantholaimos* of *Crocus speciosus* which is characterised by having a yellow throat but I also find it to be more compact flowering on a shorter stem than many other forms of this variable species.



***Crocus speciosus* ssp *xanthiolomis***

This species is especially good at “putting on the style” with its bright golden yellow multi divided style



**Crocus speciosus**

This is a very dark coloured form of *Crocus speciosus* that I received from a friend some years ago.



**Crocus kotschyanus**

As well as having most species of autumn flowering crocus outside I like to keep some in pots under glass so I can enjoy them undamaged by any bad weather that we may get. Here is a pot full of seed raised *Crocus kotschyanus* which shows little obvious variation.



### **Crocus kotschyanus**

Looking into the flowers of *Crocus kotschyanus* it is easy to see the bright orange zone forming a zig zag ring towards the base of the floral segments. This zone gave it its old name of *Crocus zonatus* which is still often used by commercial suppliers.



### **Crocus pulchellus**

*Crocus pulchellus* also grows very well out side but like all the autumn crocus it can get battered by the wind and rain so I always keep some pots of it under glass where I can enjoy the beautiful flowers and their wonderful scent.



Pollinators also appreciate visiting the crocus flowers under the protection of the glass house where I can get a good chance to photograph them up close.



**Narcissus serotinus**

Last Thursday, just before we headed south, I noticed that this flower stem had shot up from a pot of *Narcissus serotinus* seedlings sown in February 2004. This is a first for me as I have never flowered this beautiful autumn species before. Worried that it might not last until we got home I took its picture as the flower was just unfurling.



### **Narcissus serotinus**

My worries were unfounded as here is the same flower pictured on Tuesday in the sun shine.

Notice how the corona has become more prominent and turned deep orange in colour as the tepals, now slightly twisted, have expanded and acquired a crystalline white look – and it has a delicious scent.

Also you can see from this side view that there is at least one more flower to come.

I have always wanted to grow and flower this beautiful species but previous attempts from bulbs have not been successful. Now this plant has strengthened my belief that you always stand the best chance of getting bulbs to grow and flower in your conditions if you grow them from seed.

Thanks to a generous friend I have another three pots of seedlings of this species and I am now very hopeful of more flowers to come in future years. It will be even better if I can get seed from this flower – I do not know if it is self fertile but I am pollinating it with the paint brush on a daily basis.

## **Sternbergia Greuteriana**

The smallest of all the Sternbergias that I grow is Sternbergia greuteriana. – recent papers suggest that this plant along with S.sicula are part of a variable species and should come under the name of Sternbergia lutea but I find that hard to accept.

I know that some species are very variable but this tiny plant has a character of its own that must deserve its own specific name.

Below I have placed two forms of Sternbergia sicula together to show the variation that does appear in this group.



## **Sternbergia sicula**

You will notice that although they are very different in size; neither could be confused with S. greuteriana



### **Sternbergia roots**

I do not like to move pots around once they have been watered as I might damage the roots so when ever possible I try and photograph them in situ in the plunges. I decided that the best way to illustrate the variation in the forms of *Sternbergia sicula* that I have was to place these two extremes side by side and now you can see why I am reluctant to move pots around. I carefully placed it back into the plunge and then gave it a water to settle the roots back into the sand.



### **Cyclamen mirabile leaves**

Another of my favourites is *Cyclamen mirabile* especially the ones that have pink zones on the emerging leaves.



**Cyclamen mirabile**

I will finish this week with another pair of pictures the one above, taken last Thursday before we went south and the one below shows the growth of new flowers by Tuesday when we were back home.



**Cyclamen mirabile**

Both these plants were raised from seed taken from our own plants which I sowed deeply – that is half way down the pot. When I potted them on into individual pots I replanted the corm at the same depth so it is situated half way down the pot. I have been experimenting with the planting depth of the Cyclamen we grow to see how it might effect their growth and to see if I could eliminate the problem I sometimes have with rot appearing on the corm when the growth gets congested with so many flower and leaf stems rising from a small area. So far the results are positive but it will be a few more years before I can be sure if there are any benefits from planting more deeply than usually recommended.