



BULB LOG 03.....19th January 2011



Ever hungry foraging black birds have tossed aside the fallen leaves and the mulch to reveal some of the early shoots of spring. The blackbirds are not interested in the shoots as such but in their search for food they must mistake the shoots for a potential grub and dig down to expose them. A reasonable mistake when you view the close up below.





Galanthus

Now as most of December's frost has come out of the ground things are moving in the garden such as these early snowdrop flowers. These shoots of spring are a timely reminder that I must get the leaves tidied up as soon as the weather allows.



Galanthus flowers

I show yet more snowdrops this time two flowers that are growing in pots in the bulb house showing clear differences that most people should be able to see. I fear that readers will think I have contracted white fever if I continue to show Galanthus pictures.



Crocus michelsonii

Crocus michelsonii is the first of this year's Crocus to open fully for us.



I have to admit that it had some outside help. It was in tight bud and would have remained like this if left in the bulb house but I took it into the warmth of our kitchen to entice its flowers to open and reveal their considerable beauty.



Crocus michelsonii

Crocus michelsonii is a very desirable species and is still quite rare in cultivation and this also makes it expensive to buy. Is it worth a spending a lot of money on a single corm? That depends on your view point – we can all see the excessive prices being paid for a single Galanthus bulb on Ebay. These inflated prices more often reflect the collectors' desire to own something that is rare rather than something that has outstanding beauty. The same applies to Crocus michelsonii- supply and demand dictate the price and this species is expensive because there are still relatively few available rather than it being the most beautiful Crocus species there is. Given the great range of glorious Crocus flowers available to us and if they could all be presented in flower together I would challenge anyone to pick Crocus michelsonii out as the most beautiful. Yes I do find it a very beautiful species but without the added attraction of its current rarity I do not think it would come top of your list in the hypothetical scenario of being presented with all the range of crocus flowers to choose from.



Crocus seedlings

As I have often pointed out before if the seed of a particular species is planted within the optimum time window then the seedlings will germinate at around the same time as the species comes into flower. These pots are now into their second year of growth having first germinated this time last year.



plunge with 7cm pots

Under glass things are moving at an accelerated pace with considerable signs of growth every new day. Many of the buds whose growth has been suspended in the cold period are now thinking their time has come and are rushing into growth.



Corydalis buds

Whenever the sun appears around the middle of the day it does hit the bulb houses warming the air enough to activate many of the bulbs and I still find it incredible just how much growth they can achieve in a single day. There were no signs of these Corydalis shoots a few days ago but now they have responded to the rising temperature and thrust their already formed shoots from their underground lair into the air. It could still be many weeks before the flowers open - that will depend on the very changeable weather we get. It would take a few weeks of clear sunny days to warm these Corydalis enough to open their flowers and at this time of year sunny days for us are mostly accompanied by cold frosty conditions. While the flower buds of Corydalis are visible at this stage they are not full size - they are slower to open than many of the other spring flowering bulbs whose flowers are almost full size in the bud, such as Crocus.



Crocus danfordiae

These flowers of *Crocus danfordiae* really did spring into growth at a tremendous rate given that I did not even spot the buds on my routine checks the day before I took this picture. I hope that I am not speaking too soon but I seem to be having more success with this form of *Crocus danfordiae* than other forms I have tried which, in the conditions I have provided, have never thrived for very long.



Narcissus romieuxii

It is the various forms and hybrids of *Narcissus romieuxii* that will dominate the next period of flowering in the bulb houses. As well as the named forms and true species such as the pot above I have lots of seedlings showing that even within the set parameters of this variable species there is a wide variation of colour and form.



***Narcissus romieuxii* seedling - white**



***Narcissus romieuxii* - yellow**



Narcissus romieuxii seedling - white



Iris histrio

Lots of fat shoots rise from this 7cm pot of *Iris histrio* showing that you do not need a lot of space or large pots to enjoy a reasonable collection of bulbs. All of these last few pictures are of bulbs growing happily in 7cm pots.



Fritillaria stenantha shoot

A single shoot in a pot of *Fritillaria stenantha* suggests that it will not be long before I see lots of growth appear above ground in the Fritillaria house. From its structure I can tell that this is a leaf from a non flowering sized bulb and these non flowering growths often appear just ahead of the flowering spikes.



Eranthis pinnatifida

In an outside frame the first signs of the flowering stems of *Eranthis pinnatifida* with their flower buds bent downwards like a shepherd's crook and enclosed by the ruff of leaflet. The emergence of so many stems holds out the promise of a display of great beauty in a few weeks time.



***Eranthis pinnatifida* seedlings**

More evidence that provided it is sown in the optimum time and favourable conditions, bulb seed will germinate at or around the same time as the mature plants come into flower.



Slug damage

Checking the frames I was disappointed to see this slug damage showing that we have hardy slugs that are quite capable of coming out for a mid-winter feast on my fresh green bulb shoots. As a rule I do not like using poisons around the garden but the seed frames are one of the few places that I will use slug pellets. One or two pellets per pot is sufficient to deal with the problem not the excessive wall of pellets that I see so often used by general gardeners around our area .



Even a single pellet will attract a slug away from an emerging Crocus bud to a toxic snack.



The midday sun is slowly climbing higher in the sky and the daylight hours are noticeably extending. Whenever the weather allows we will have to work to lift all the fallen leaves before the spring growth advances too much.....