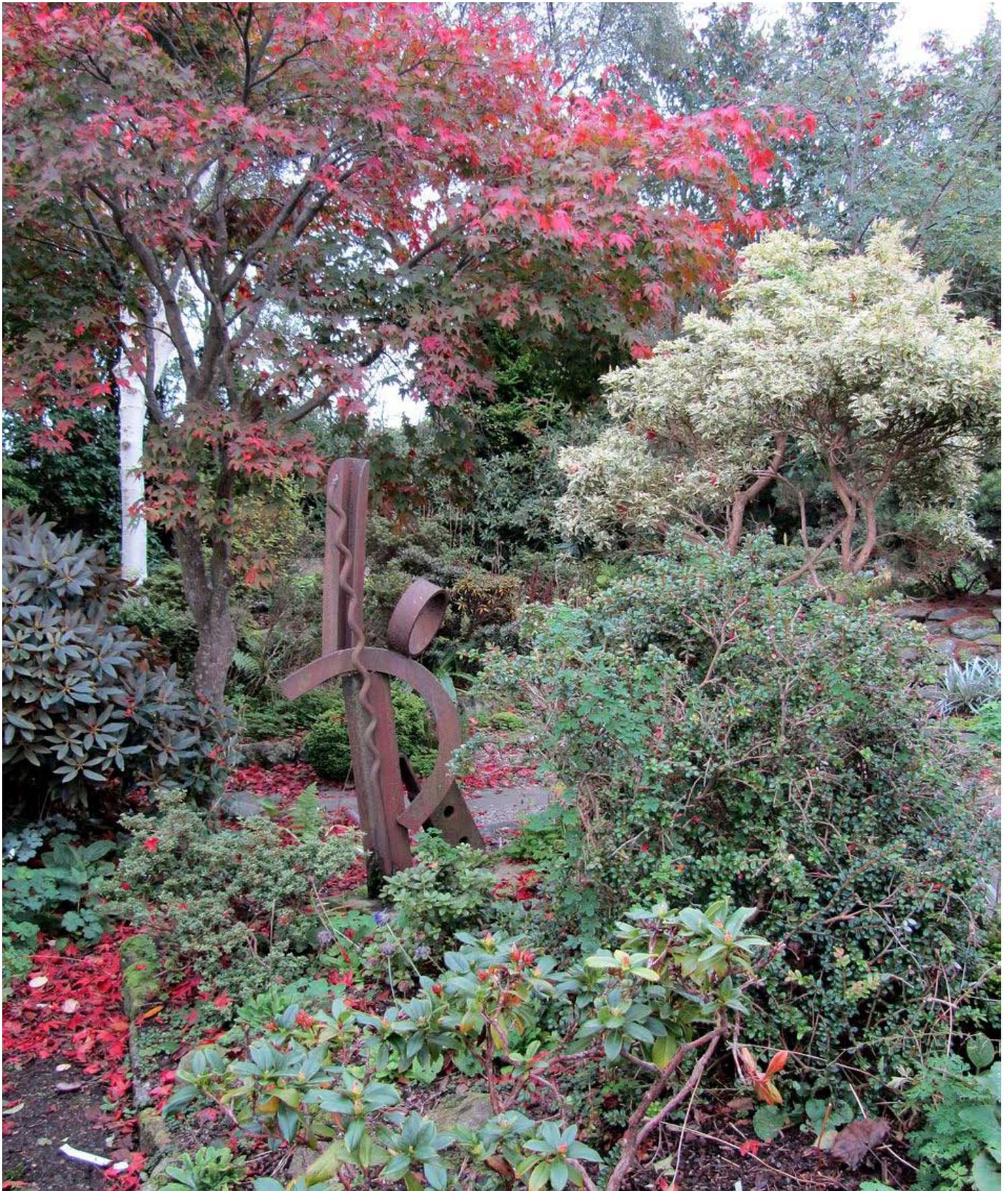




BULB LOG 40.....5th October 2011



Autumn is advancing at an alarming rate and all the deciduous foliage is dying back with that characteristic blaze of glorious colours – red from the anthocyanins, orange and yellows from the carotenoides making it such a lovely time of the year. The threat of imminent frost and snow is not such an exciting prospect.



The yellowing foliage and fallen leaves contrast so well with the new emerging leaves of the Cyclamen which are just starting their life cycle as most of the others are coming to the end of theirs. I am never in a hurry to lift the leaves from these beds - that is a job for November or December - except where they fall on the Cyclamen and evergreen plants that could be harmed by being covered in fallen leaves.



Arisaema berries

Other seasonal splashes of colour are provided by the many berries including the brilliant orange red Arisaema.

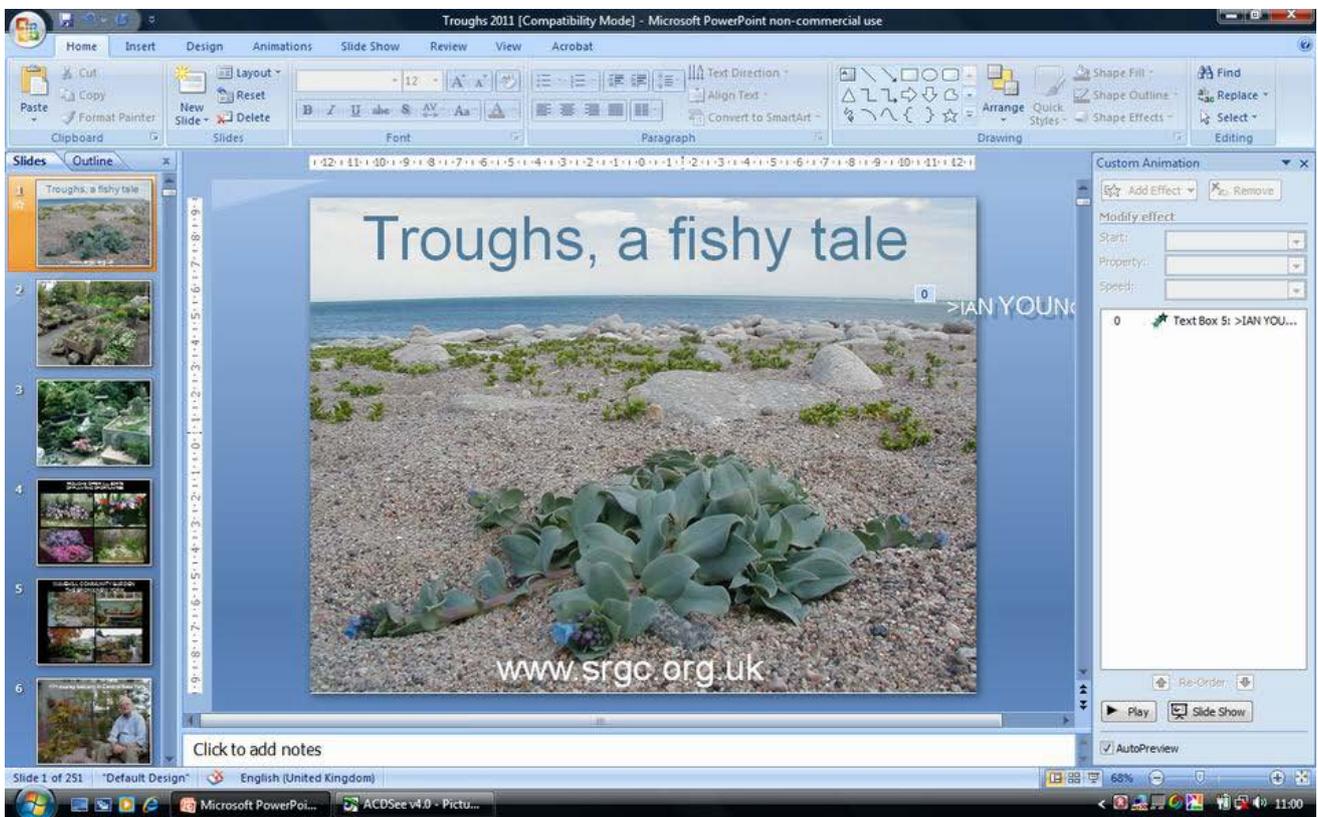


Hepaticas and their seedlings will retain their leaves all through the year in our garden and I normally cut them off in January or February to allow the flowers to be enjoyed without the presence of the previous year's leaves.

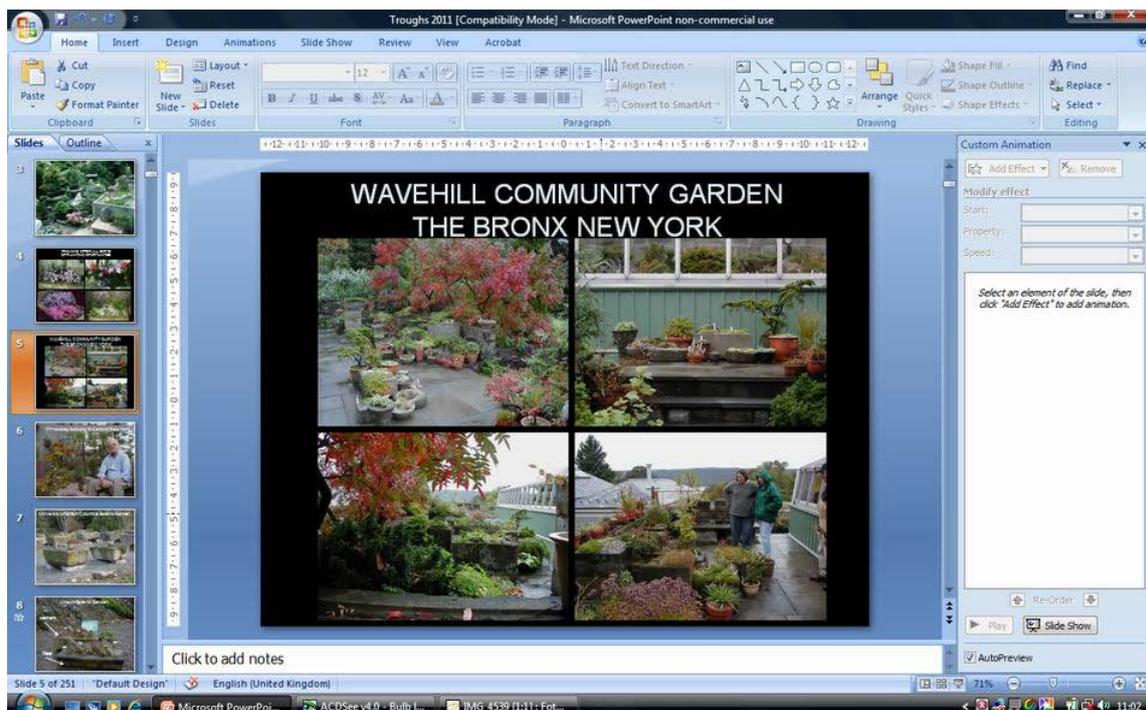


Romulea bulbocodium* var *crocea

Only sown as seed in January 2011 this *Romulea bulbocodium* var *crocea* is already producing its first flowers.



Currently most of my time seems to be taken up by my speaking engagements – not just the travelling but also the preparation of the presentation. I thought when I accepted these invitations, often a year or more in advance, that it would be easy as most of the talks were ones I have constructed already. However that is not how it is - I am reworking all the talks - some just need brining up to date with new pictures, others are being completely reworked. I love Power Point it is such a good way to help deliver your message but you need to use it carefully with an understanding of how it will look projected in a large room and not on the computer screen just in front of you. Some tips that I have learnt along the way are always place your text especially plant names at the top of the slide. The bottom is more intuitive when the PC screen is in front of you but with an audience the bottom of the projection screen is often obscured by the heads of people in front of you. Also make the size of the text as big as you can – again what seems very easy to read on the computer monitor can seem much smaller when viewed from the back of a lecture room.



Resist using too many multiple images on one slide. Again these are perfectly clear when viewed close up but can seem like postage stamps in a larger room. It is nice to use the occasional multiple image to break up the look of your presentation or to make a direct comparison between two images. It takes no more time to speak to four separate large images that everyone can see clearly than it does to talk individually about each of four small images sharing the same slide.



Bulb house

Growth is well advanced in the bulb house since I applied the first storm in early September.



Narcissus leaves

It is now time for the second storm when I again thoroughly soak all the pots of bulbs – the Fritillaria house will now get its first soaking. It is at this stage of growth that so many people go wrong with the watering and feeding of the winter growing bulbs. The clue is in that description ‘winter growing’. It is essential that these bulbs get plenty water and food during this most critical period of growth when they are making all that new leaf. If you have repotted them this year then there should be adequate food but they

can only take that up if there is also sufficient water around and that is the key. A second soaking will help but after that never let them dry out; in warm periods they will need regular watering to support all this greenery, failure to do this will result in the bulbs breaking down into lots of small bulbs instead of growing on to form good sized flowering bulbs. This is one of their phases of maximum growth and when they are under glass it is solely down to us to supply the necessary water and nutrition. The challenge in colder areas like ours is to try and avoid giving too much water when heavy frosts are likely, since the wetter the compost the more likely it is that the freezing will damage the bulb. Choose a bright sunny day to water and do it early so the surplus has plenty time to drain and evaporate away before the cold comes in at nightfall.



Bulb house

I am relieved and delighted to see that despite our heavy losses from last winter there are still plenty of Crocus flowers appearing.



Crocus caspius



Crocus caspius

I have a number of pots of *Crocus caspius* all of which survived the freezing conditions last winters. This picture apparently show slightly different coloured clones but that is not the case – the flowers come out white and pick up a slight violet flecking after a day or two. In fact I have never noticed any significant variation in any of the many seedlings of this species I have raised.



Crocus banaticus

While we grow most of our *Crocus banaticus* outside I like to have a few under glass, at least at flowering time, so we can enjoy the most unusual flowers undamaged by either the physical properties of the weather or the attentions of slugs and snails.



Crocus kotschyanus

The same applies to the very hardy *Crocus kotschyanus* which grows so well in the garden but it is nice to see the flowers up close and undamaged.



Crocus kotschyanus

In this picture you can see that there is some variation in the seedlings of this species.



Crocus longiflorus

Another species that has proven hardy for us under cold glass is *Crocus longiflorus* – you will see from the shoots that there are many more flowers to come.



Crocus medius

Crocus medius has a wonderful colour combination with violet petals, golden yellow pollen and the striking orange-red style.



Crocus laevigatus and C. niveus

This picture is just to illustrate the difference in size between *Crocus laevigatus* on the left and *C. niveus*, right.



Crocus laevigatus



Crocus laevigatus



I finish this week's bulb log with a few pictures of **Crocus laevigatus** - one of my many my favourite species of Crocus.