



BULB LOG 02.....11<sup>th</sup> January 2012



**Eranthis hyemalis seed germinating**

It is always exciting to see the first seeds germinating in a new year: here I show a batch of Eranthis hyemalis seed germinating now in an outside frame. Although the date on the label says it was sown in May 2009 I added some fresh seed last year and this is what you see. The older seedlings from the original date will appear a bit later.

**Jasmine nudiflorum**





### **Hamamelis 'Ruby Glow'**

Around the garden it is the usual winter flowering shrubs that are providing the flowering interest. Jasmine nudiflorum is such a good plant, flowering year after year, that it should be in every garden. Every garden should also have at least one Hamamelis this is the form 'Ruby Glow' always the first to flower in our garden and after flowering they provide valuable structure and height without over-shading the ground around their base.



### **Old growth**

I am never quick to cut back the old growth on the herbaceous plants for a number of reasons. First I enjoy the structure and variation it gives to a bed as it decays and also it is good for the wild life that visits the garden especially the birds that can be seen regularly poking about in the decayed stems looking for any remaining seeds or insects to feed on.



### **Roots and Shoots**

Having removed the old growth I find both shoots and roots appearing on the surface. This is a clump that has not been split for a few years and as the number of tubers increases they often are forced near the surface exposing their roots like this. A good covering of mulch will protect the roots.



### **Dactylorhiza shoots**

I remove the old stems by tugging them upwards with a sharp movement sometimes I need to place my other hand on the ground to prevent the tubers being pulled up. I make sure that any holes left around the shoots are filled in to discourage slugs from gaining easy access to the tubers.



**Dactylorhiza tubers**

I would not normally lift the Dactylorhiza tubers at this time but because the weather has been so good I decided to tip out some of the stems which I had lifted, removed the new tubers from and potted last year. My thought was that I could separate the secondary batch of tubers that had formed and space them out to give them a better chance to grow away in the spring but I was slightly surprised by what I found. The old tuber was still quite large and firm and so was still in the process of passing its store of food on to these new formed tubers – so I replanted them as they are and will split them up at the end of this year’s growing season.



**Tidy! Bed**

With the stems all removed this bed is ready for the spring bulbs. Normally at this time I would be removing the leaves and spreading a fresh mulch of composted prunings but I do not have a lot of mulch this year so I am going to leave some of the beds with this natural covering of leaves instead. The other reason I always removed the leaves was to produce leaf mould but I also have built up so much leaf mould that I have no room for any more at the present.



**Allium stems**

I am not in any hurry to remove these Allium stems as I think they are very decorative, like fireworks against a dark sky.



**Helleborus and Hepatica leaves**

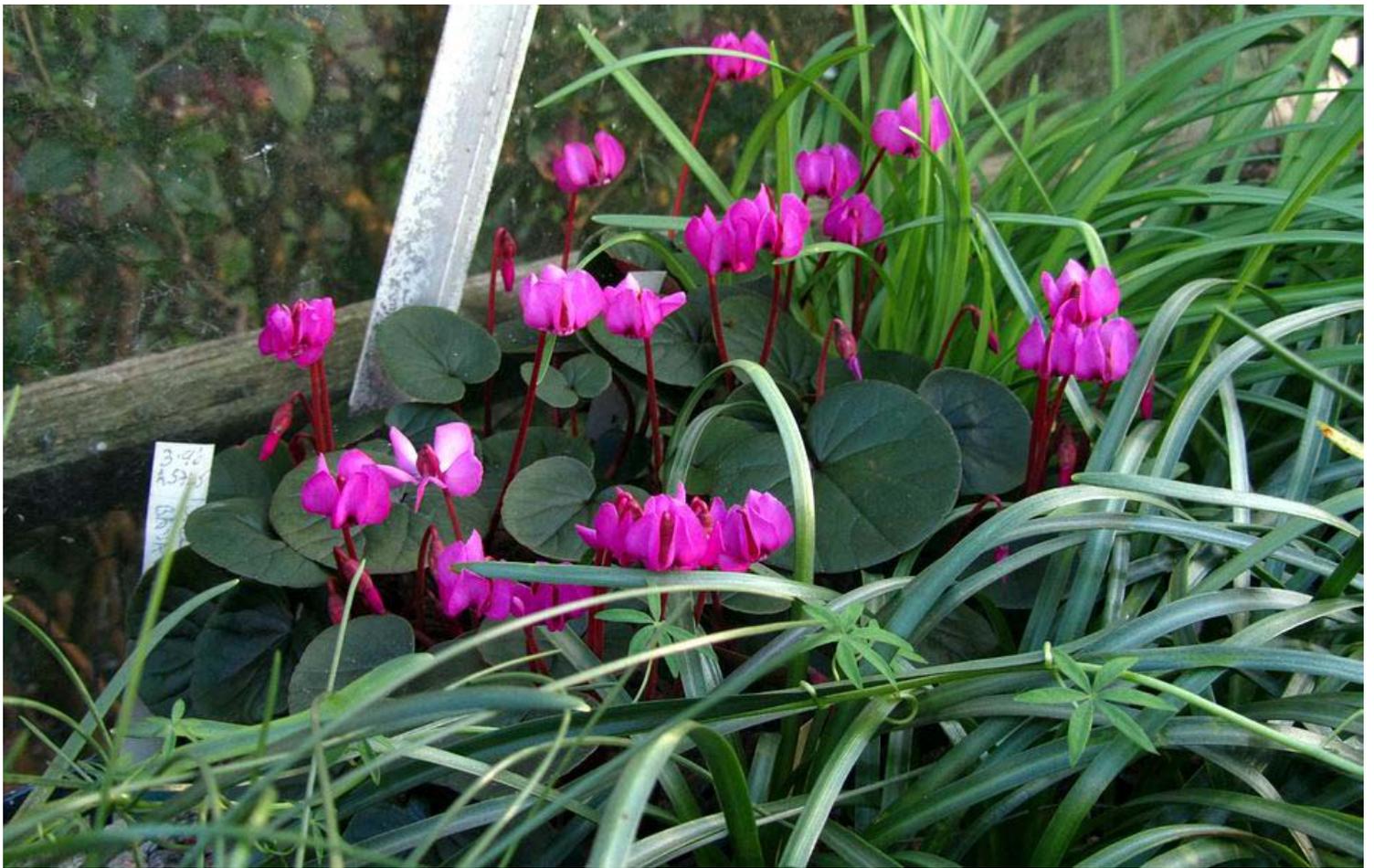
Should you remove the leaves of Helleborus and Hepatica and, if so, when should you do it, is a common question. The simple answer is that in nature no one does it but then the conditions in the wild may mean that the leaves do not remain all through the year as they do in our gardens. I enjoy their presence through the winter and would normally remove them late in January or early February just before the new growth emerges. This season is so early that I have removed them all now as many are already responding to the mild conditions and one Helleborus, see below, is already in flower.



**Helleborus hybrid**



**Cyclamen coum** seedling flowering in the garden.



### **Cyclamen coum**

Moving under glass I have one pot of *Cyclamen coum* which is now in full flower. I have struggled to find clones that will flower well in our garden conditions but I am at last hopeful that some of the hundreds of seeds that I have scattered all over the garden are showing early signs of not just tolerating our garden but will actually display their flowers as well.



### **Fritillaria davisii**

The early risers are now just starting to appear in the *Fritillaria* house like this pot of *Fritillaria davisii*. While it is always among the first to show leaf it is not among the first to flower.





***Narcissus cantabricus monophyllus***

There are so many differences between this plant and the other *Narcissus cantabricus* that I grow that it is difficult to understand why it has not been described as a separate species.



***Narcissus romieuxii***

The way these flowers change shape and colour as they open is one of their many fascinations.



**Narcissus romieuxii**

This is the same clone at different stages it opens almost white and then the yellow hue develops.



A very clean edged and flat faced **Narcissus romieuxii**.



My compact camera - a Canon PowerShot SX210IS- has become my constant companion. While I do use my Olympus digital SLR for the very detailed portrait pictures like those above most of the other pictures I show in the bulb log are taken using my compact. The picture on the left was taken with the camera on the fully automatic setting. I tend to always leave my compact at that setting when I switch it off so that if I have to grab it to capture a quick image it will always get me something reasonable.

However as the camera tried to balance out the exposure between the dramatic rich colour of the sky with the low light in the garden it produced a very washed out version. Not at all like the impression that I was getting as I stood looking at this dramatic scene.

To get the true saturation of the sunset and some detail in the fore ground I switched the camera to shutter speed priority which allowed me to also force the flash to fire. I then took a meter reading from the sky by pointing the camera at the sky and holding the button half way down to hold that setting then I tracked the camera angle downwards to get the image you now see and pushed the shutter button all the way down. The beauty of digital is that you can get an instant preview and make any adjustments you need to get the exposure and image that you want. It was to gain this extra creative control that I switched up from my Canon Ixus.

