





The opening images bring together many aspects or habitat types from our garden, a humus rich bed with early bulbs in the foreground with a sand bed of bulbs immediately behind - then you see a group of troughs representing the mountains and alpine plants - to add to the mix you see the bottom of a bulb house and the edge of a frame suggesting other environments that we provide for our plants.



Another view across the same bed brings into play another important group of plants in our garden - the shrubs, which along with trees, greatly add to the look of our garden. They provide a year round structure forming variable environments where we can plant the seasonal bulbs and herbaceous plants.



Over the years my wish has been to create a garden that suits the plants well enough to allow them to naturalise – that is to self-seed creating naturalistic colonies. Here in the gravel **Narcissus bulbocodium** is one of the many bulbs that seeds freely.



At one time we had grass where the gravel is until we realised that lawn grass was the least interesting plant in our garden and it required the most work. We lifted all the grass and replaced it with gravel with the intention that it would be additional walk way but we soon realised that we had created the perfect seed bed for all types of plants.

I want the garden to work on many levels so whether you view the wider area or home in on a small grouping it should provide visual and botanical interest. Also we want each area to provide changing interest through the seasons with a succession of flowers and plants. A small area of the rock garden where Crocus and early bulbs featured a month ago is now entering another stage of interest with **Anemone ranunculoides** and **Muscari** flowering - Meconopsis leaves giving the clue to what will provide some of the colour in another months' time.



Another vignette over the bird bath with **Erythronium revolutum** and **Corydalis solida** and **C. malkensis**.



Gardens go through stages and we must never be afraid to make radical changes – over thirty years our front garden had become a congested shrubbery. Two years ago we decided it was time to change so we identified the trees and

shrubs we wanted to keep and removed the rest. It was sad to have to remove so many beautiful plants, mostly Rhododendrons, but the reward is that their removal opened up a great planting opportunity.



We cut back the front in two stages, one half we did two years ago is now starting to be well planted as we work on creating a succession planting. This kind of planting takes time to develop fully and we sometimes make mistakes as we try out different combinations so we will lift and move some of the plants around at the appropriate season.



***Dicentra cucullaria*
'Pink Punk'**

Dicentra cucullaria 'Pink Punk' is a lovely selection of this species made by Henrik Zetterlund - as the name suggests it has good pink flowers. Its foliage covers the ground with soft leaves, providing an excellent foil for bulbs such as *Erythronium* and *Trillium* to grow through—but care should be taken not to plant any of the smaller bulbs in this combination as they can be swamped by the *Dicentra* foliage.



Celmisia spectabilis

It is important when working up these mixed plantings to include evergreen plants that will provide year round structure and interest to the beds - here we are using *Celmisias*, above, and *Aciphylla* on the right, to do just that.

I am lucky enough to have seen these plants growing in New Zealand where I noticed that they often grew in combination with tussock grasses so do not mind close plantings provided the companions are not too vigorous and overpowering.



Aciphylla glaucescens



We cut back the second half of the front around this time last year and so we are still working up the planting. One thing I have learned over the years that I have been gardening is the patience to enjoy the process of establishing a new area. I have scattered a lot of seed, Erythronium, Lily, Primula, etc. in these open areas hoping some of it will thrive.



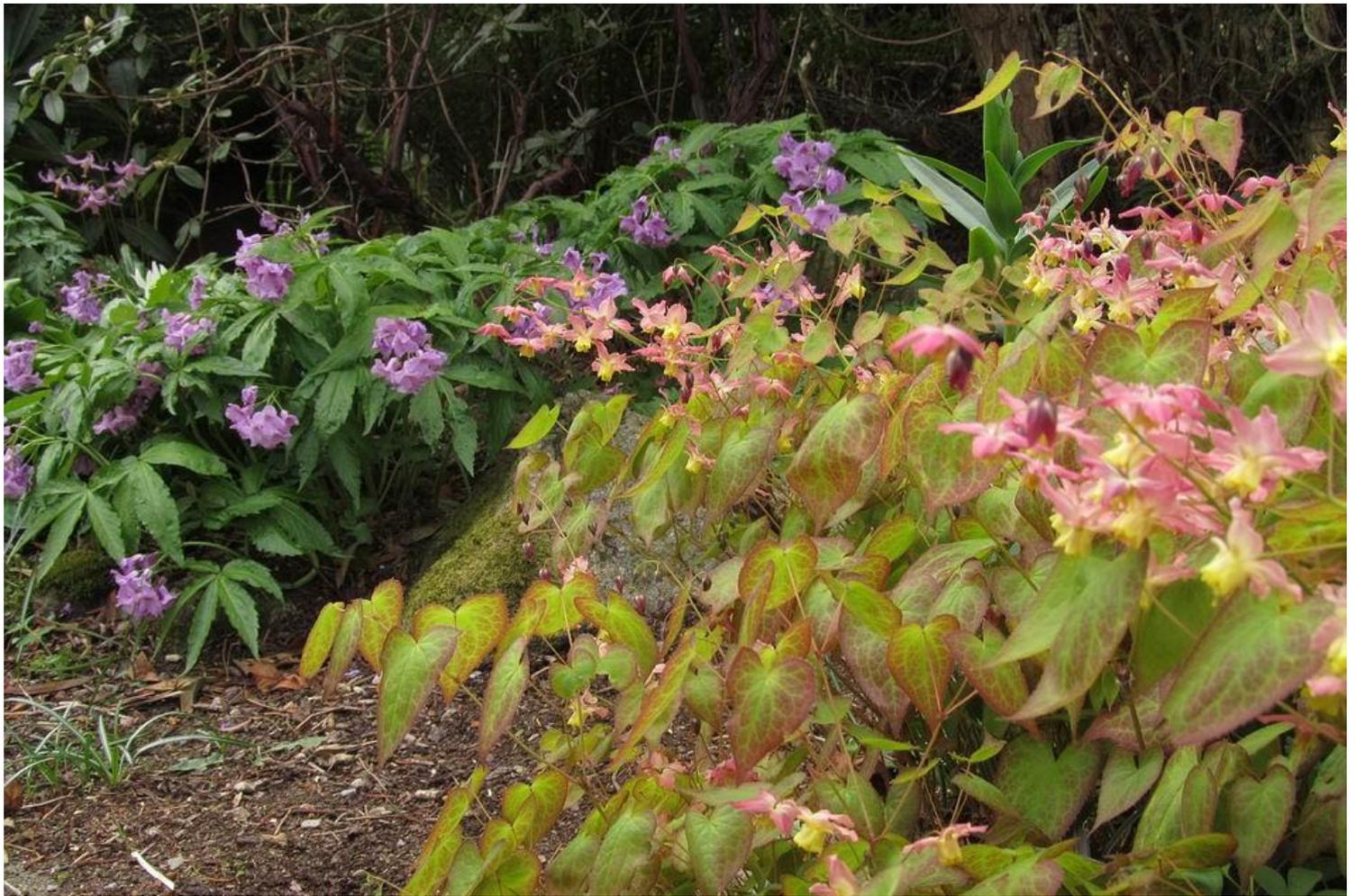
Anemone blanda planted in a mixed group to encourage seeding.

We like to make full use of every bit of our garden - to this end we have been scattering seed into the gravel area in the front driveway for over twenty years so we now have a succession of mostly bulbous plants flowering through the seasons.

It starts early in the year with the Eranthis, Crocus, and Narcissus now it is Erythronium, Fritillaria and Narcissus that feature.



Erythronium revolutum



The early spring leaves of **Epimedium** are soft and beautifully coloured perfectly complimenting the flowers with **Cardamine pentaphylla** in the background.



Self-seeding hellebores bring interest to areas for a long time – here they surround the stem of a tree peony.



Typical planting in our garden is made up of groups of compatible plants forming supportive communities that both retain moisture/humidity and reduce wind exposure.



Bulbs like Trillium, Fritillaria and Erythronium have evolved to grow through other plants so not only are they well adapted to this kind of planting in our gardens they benefit from them. I really do not want to see the bare ground at this time of year.



A view across the raised wall with *Trillium rivale*, towards a seat and some *Rhododendrons*.



Sharing and succession plantings can also be applied to troughs: here our twin westies **Molly** and **Megan** stand in front of a trough where *Galanthus* and *Sanguinaria* cohabit.



Earlier in the year the Galanthus were in their full flowering glory now below they play a supporting role.



Sanguinaria canadensis

The lovely double flowers of *Sanguinaria canadensis* push through the *Galanthus* leaves. These plants live in perfect harmony in this trough as they both enjoy similar growing conditions but by the summer when the leaves of *Sanguinaria canadensis* wither back underground the trough looks bare and empty. I first started to grow the *Sanguinaria* in this trough for propagation purposes - enabling me to split it every year or two - accidentally a single bulb of *Galanthus* got in and has since multiplied. It is now at the stage that when I replant it this summer I will remove at least half of the *Galanthus* bulbs and *Sanguinaria* rhizomes and plant them into the front garden.



The sunshine we are having has brought out the Erythronium flowers in the plunge beds and all over the garden.



Erythronium 'Eirene'

The late John Walker of Kent raised some of the best Erythronium hybrids that that I know of - he named two sister seedlings for his granddaughters, Susannah and Eirene - both are outstanding *E. tuloumense* hybrids. Erythronium 'Eirene' above is paler in colour.



Erythronium 'Susannah'



More on Erythroniums next week check out the latest [Bulb Log video diary supplements](#) I will leave you with nice coloured **Trillium chloropetalum** seedling.....