



Miss Lily

The cover picture of Miss Lily was taken just a few weeks ago.

Sadly I have to announce that our Miss Lily passed away on Friday 21st at the age of 16 years, 8 months and three weeks. Many of you will know of Miss Lily, from her pictures that appear in a number of Bulb Logs and in my talks, after we re-homed her in 2007 when she was 8 years old.

Since then she has been our constant companion accompanying us to SRGC events all over Scotland where many of you will have met her.

Miss Lily was a very special wee dog - many of you that met her on her trips or visited the garden, when she always walked around with us, will inevitably have also fallen under her charms – she had many fans around the world.



Whenever I worked in the garden Miss Lily wanted to be with me also when I gave workshops she was there.

I have written much about the artistic, scientific and horticultural elements of the garden but I do not think I have mentioned the therapeutic side to gardening.

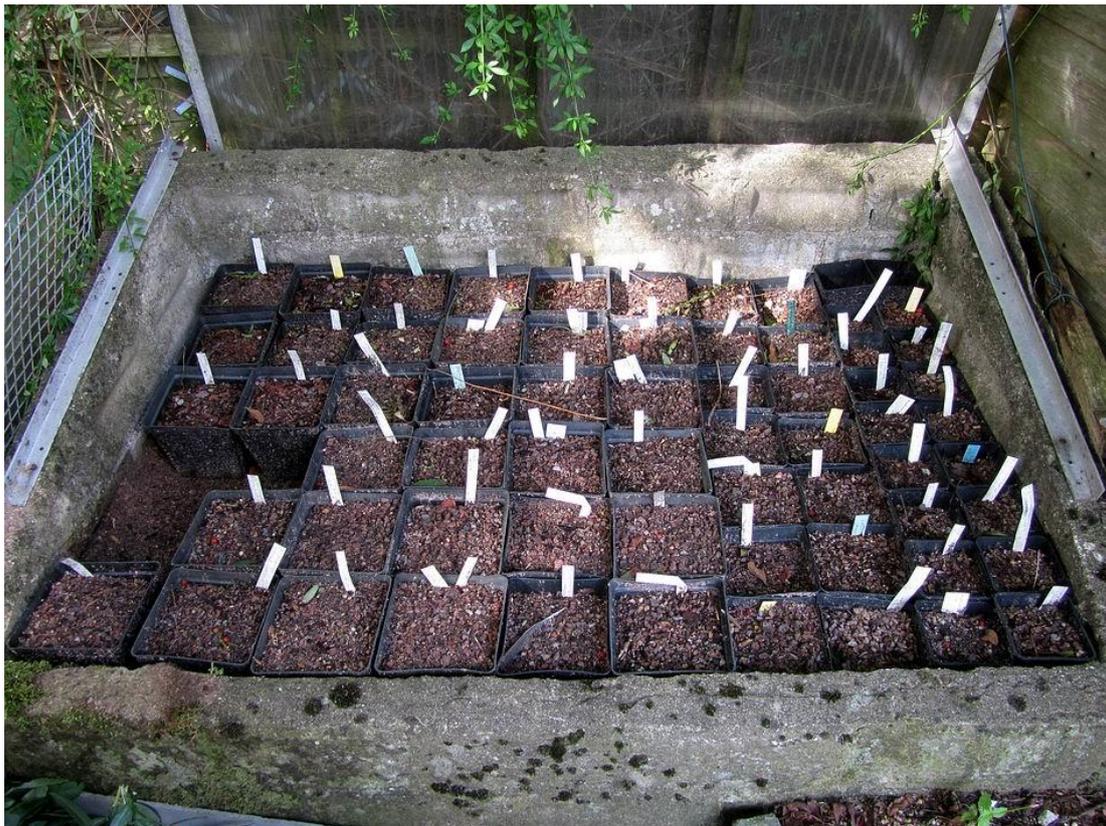
To us our garden is a haven where we can relax and enjoy the plants, birds and other wildlife in our own landscape which isolates us from the urban environment. Many a time when my mind was weighed down with a problem I have been rapidly restored by the garden.



Miss Lily



Our gardens are in a constant state of change - we cannot expect things to stay the same as the seasons and years go by. One change I have made is that the frame above used to be for the Erythroniums growing in pots however with the passing of time I have more need for plunge basket space so I have converted this frame over for that purpose; as you can see it now holds 24 mesh plunge baskets.



The pots have been moved to this slightly smaller frame that sits at right angles to the previous one.

Basically I have swapped the contents around so this frame that has up to now been used for plunge baskets now holds the pots.

When I have filled the frames I will top them both off with a mulch of shredded prunings to help preserve moisture but more importantly to reduce the growth of weeds and liverworts.



There are so many changes going on in our garden at this time of year – seasonal tasks such as the repotting and summer pruning as well as the seasonal changes in the bulb beds. The bed above has been giving us colour and interest since late January when the first *Galanthus* and *Crocus* flowers emerged and since then there has been a

constant changing picture with a succession of bulbs and herbaceous plants taking their turn to flower. I try very hard to find plants to continue this theme for as long a period as we can but inevitably the flowering diminishes. I continually assess the beds, looking at what else is in flower just now and consider if it would work in with this time-sharing bed. This week I have cut back all the early season's growth from plants such as *Delphinium*, *Aquilegia* and *Aconitum* as I am now anticipating the appearance of the *Colchicum*, *Crocus*, *Cyclamen* and other autumn flowering bulbs.

One of the plants, just coming into flower now, that helps

bridge the gap is ***Eucomis bicolor*** so I will look to increase it. I have tried other *Eucomis* but this is the only one that has proved to be reliably hardy long-term in our garden.

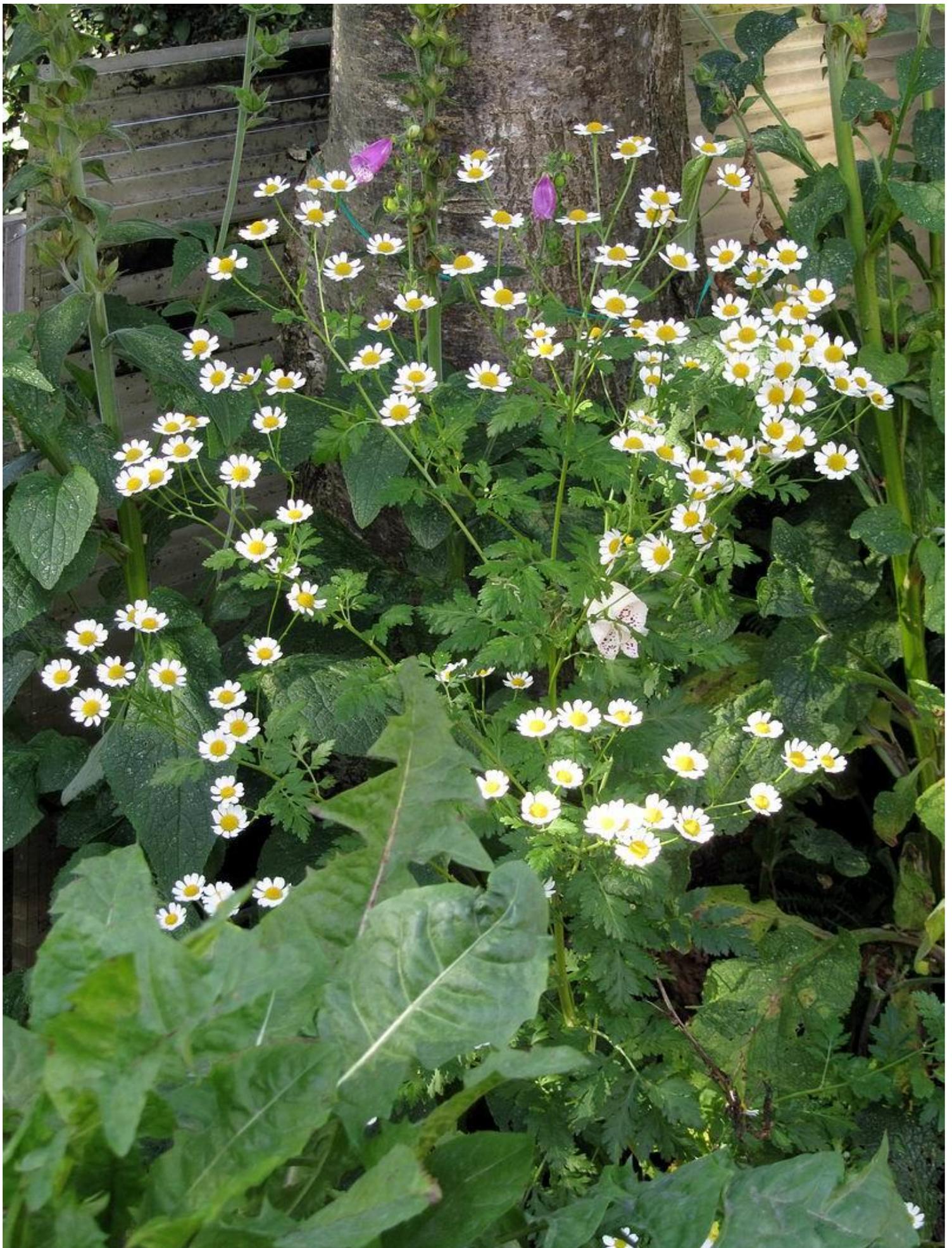




It is not just a case of choosing any plant, sowing late flowering annuals for instance - they have to be able to thrive shaded under the cover of all the growth that I just cut away. *Primula florindae* is one plant that I have identified as a possible and trials show that it will grow in these conditions albeit it is rather taller as a result of the competition.



One plant that has come to my mind is ***Tanacetum parthenium*** – one of those volunteer plants that regularly appear in our gardens - some of you may call it a weed.



I do not like using the weed word I prefer to call them wild flowers which like many plants may have a place in our garden. Here is *Tanacetum parthenium*, feverfew to give it its common name, flowering beautifully at the base of the Sorbus tree picking up the flowering from the *Digitalis* that featured on the cover of [Bub Log 2715](#)



I have thought of using **Codonopsis grey-wilsonii** but rejected that idea as it would twine up all the stems I need to cut back at this time so I have ruled that one out from this bulb bed. These flowers are well chewed by snails!



One possibility, especially around the edges of the bed, would be **Cyananthus lobatus** which I will try and the Colchicum flowers would look great rising through the sea of foliage and blue flowers.



Elsewhere the troughs of **Rhodohypoxis baurii** continue to flower with some volunteer plants appearing.



One rather attractive combination is the Rhodohypoxis flowers appearing through the foliage of the volunteer Oxalis.



There is a similar situation in the front garden where the foliage of the Corydalis 'Craigton Blue' is yellowing and dying back so I have been cutting it off to allow the light in for the autumn bulbs.



The front of this bed has been cleared of the 'Craigton Bue' foliage revealing the plants underneath.



A number of the New Zealand plants provide great all year round foliage. The larger leaved *Celmisia* cope better than the smaller ones such as *Celmisia incana* which as you can see, on the right of the picture, has suffered from being overgrown. I will move it nearer the edge of the bed where it can get better light like the *Leucogenes leontopodium* in the foreground.



Even without flowers we can enjoy a fine variety of foliage with *Celmisia spectabilis* in the front.



Sorbus berries, Hypericum flowers and a wide range of foliage means there is still plenty of interest to attract the eye and be appreciated. Sometimes we can put too much emphasis on flowers in the garden and while they are beautiful they are with us for a very short time, sometimes only a single day, while the leaves stay around for much longer.



We planted this **Phygelius** a long time ago and it was quickly overgrown by the Rhododendrons – we thought it had gone completely but since we cut back the shrubs and opened up the front garden it has recovered.



This dwarf Rhododendron has flowered at least twice a year for every one of the thirty years we have grown it. It is **R. saluenense subsp. chameunum** –sometimes just called R. chameunum.



It has a similar number of flowers in the Spring as it does now. These dwarf shrubs used to sit as individual mounds but now form a single mound giving a wonderful varied tapestry of foliage, notice the *Vaccinium* foliage on the right which takes on the dark purple blotches every year.



There is nothing wrong with the plant which is deciduous it is purely the autumn colouration starting.



Rhododendron bureavii



Rhododendron yakushimanum



Rhododendron lepidostylum



Our latest cut back and regeneration project is at the southern end of the garden where we cut down five large Cotoneaster trees in January.

It was only once we had taken the trees down that we saw just how much of an effect they had on all the surrounding trees and shrubs which are all leaning out to the north in search of some light. Many branches on the south side have died back or have very weak growth.

It is an exciting time in the life of a garden when maturity comes then is followed by cut back and renewal.

I am continuing to cut and reshape the remaining trees and Rhododendrons as you can tell from the pile of branches on the ground awaiting the shredder.



The ground below is well planted with Erythroniums Trilliums and other plants that should all appreciate the extra light as do the shrubs many of which are already responding to the open conditions by putting on more vigorous growth than they have for years.

New vigorous shoots can now grow upwards to the light now they are not overgrown by the trees.



Time stops for no man: Miss Lily had a good long life bringing us so much happiness she will always be a part of us. We are not left alone however as we still have the company of our other two wee dogs, nine year old litter sisters Molly and Megan, who were kindly welcomed by Miss Lily into her home two years ago.....