



BULB LOG 04 .....28<sup>th</sup> January 2015





Hamamelis 'Jelena' flowers look so good especially when the light comes from behind or the side, firing them up against a dark background like fairy lights on a tree. These fleeting light displays are especially noticeable in winter when the sun is very low in the sky. A real success for us is that we have now found a place in our garden where **Cyclamen coum** thrives. For years we have tried it in many different spots in the garden but could only do it justice in a pot. When I made the first sand bed for bulbs I

scattered some Cyclamen coum seeds in the upper layers of sand and that has resulted in some well-established plants with a succession of self-sown seedlings of varying ages.



I am always interested the variations that occur in plant species. The plants above most obviously have different coloured flowers but also a different growth habit - the upper one forming a nice compact grouping of the leaves while in the lower ones are more straggly. It really teaches us that just because a plant does not grow where you first try it in your garden it is worth persevering and trying it in different places. Sometimes simply moving it a short

distance can make a huge difference.



From my chair in our sitting room I look across to this raised bed, like viewing a distant mountain scene - at certain times the low light briefly highlights the fruiting bodies on the moss elevating the scene to something special.



The moss, growing on my broken concrete landscapes, is both a friend and an enemy. I want it to grow in some places as it is beneficial in providing a rooting medium for some plants or a place for others to self-seed into but I do not want it to totally hide all the rock so some measure of control is needed.



Concrete trough mountain encased in ice and snow.



**Saxifraga Trough**



While we have avoided the worst of the snow the temperatures have been below freezing most days. When the sun does break through the snow and ice start to thaw only to freeze hard again as the sun goes down. Although the alpine plants such as the saxifrages are completely encased in ice for several days they suffer no harm.



**Saxifragas**



**Douglasia laevigata  
Gothenburg form**

The flower buds on the saxifragas continue to expand heralding the flowers to come in some weeks' time. Also the flower buds on Douglasia (Androsace) laevigata, Gothenburg form, are quite noticeable and also expanding slowly.



Previously I have written about the many advantages there are to building up great height when you are landscaping your troughs and here is yet another advantage – at this time they look like miniature snow and ice capped mountain ranges.



The same conditions have caused ice caps to form on the seed pots in the exposed frames or, as here, in boxes sitting about on our paths because the frames are already full!



As the temperature climbs above freezing the snow and ice starts to melt but, as the compost below is completely frozen through, the water cannot drain away and so just sits there.



This same effect of water sitting on top of the frozen compost will happen in all the pots and containers exposed to the elements – it should not cause harm to seeds in fact I think this treatment often encourages a better germination with many seeds. For many other plants growing in exposed pots these conditions can be a real issue and could damage the plant but it can be resolved in the short term by laying the pots on their sides to allow water to drain away. In our troughs with high landscaping these conditions present no problem as the plants are planted above the level where the water gathers.



### Lily seeds

Like many of you, I am involved with seed sowing just now. I sowed most of our bulb seeds back in August/September but always wait until late January before I sow the summer growing Lilies, such as *Lilium mackliniae*, *Nomocharis*, *Notholirion*, etc. The reason for this is that this group do not require a cold period to germinate and sowing too early will only result in the seeds germinating before winter sets in and then you have the problem of getting the fragile young plants through a winter.



As you can see I do not sow bulb seeds thinly –it is only if I have a very large amount that I would split them between a few pots. If you only have a few seeds and you want to give them the very best start then sow each individual lily type seed pointed end down into the surface of the compost. When I have this much seed I just scatter them then work the over gently

with a fork which turns many on their edge - this works fine. The first shoot of growth always comes out of the pointed end of these seeds.



This 7cm pot of **Narcissus romieuxii JCA805** peers through the glass greeting me as I approach the bulb house.



For a number of years I have had a growing interest in Ornithogalums. Most of those we grow as just species with a collection location and I must admit I have never made any real effort to identify them properly. I was delighted to see that Brian Mathew has an article on them in the latest 'Rock Garden' the Journal of the SRGC which has just arrived. It is packed full of interesting articles and pictures and is alone worth joining the SRGC

for – you can join as a postal Member if you want to be sent the hard copy in the post or you can join as an online Member and download it as a PDF to read on your PC or tablet. [Join here](#)



We found this weird form of slime fungus (?) growing on this bit of dead wood in the garden. Does anyone know what it is?



***Eranthis pinnatifida* seedlings**

Here a pot of *Eranthis pinnatifida* seed sown collected and sown from our own plants in May last year is germinating well, it is worth noting that unlike true *Eranthis* seedlings which are bicot with two seed leaves *Eranthis pinnatifida* has only a single seed leaf in the first year. How long I have to wait before I see a flower will depend on how well I grow it but I normally get them into flower three years from sowing.



***Eranthis pinnatifida* pink form**

As readers of the Forum pages will know they grow a wonderful range of this plant in differing forms in Japan and we were lucky enough to be sent some fresh seed from a kind friend in April 2012. These are the first flowers emerging from these seed pots and to my delight I can see the pink colour on both the seedlings- only slightly chewed by a slug. What a wonderful place our [forum](#) is - bringing us all together.....