



SRGC

----- Bulb Log Diary -----

Pictures and text © Ian Young

BULB LOG 16.....20th April 2016



April always brings showers and we are certainly seeing plenty of them just now - a cold wind from the north has brought rain, sleet, hail and snow and that is all in one day. However we are also enjoying periods of sunshine which soon melts away any lying snow as well encouraging the flowers to open. This week's cover picture is **Erythronium 'Susannah'** which in my view is the best of all the *E. tuolumnense* hybrids.



Cold temperatures at night allow the snow to cover the plants but once daylight comes the spells of sunshine soon melt it away and as you will see in the picture below the flowers soon sit up again.



Erythronium revolutum

Creating our garden has been a long slow process with the majority of the plants being raised from seed. Growing from seed is the cheapest way to get plants and in some cases the only way you will be able to acquire some of the more unusual ones. Other advantages of raising your plants from seed are that you build up numbers – with a bit of patience for the cost of buying a single plant you can raise ten, twenty or even more depending on the number of seeds in the packet. One advantage of raising from seed is that all the plants will be different clones so you will get variation in how they appear; another is that a group of different clones, where cross pollination can occur, will also be more fertile, providing you with your own seed and that is when you have the opportunity to sow in big numbers.



***Erythronium sibiricum* (krylovii?)**

Another advantage of raising plants from seed collected in your own garden is that each generation will become more adapted to your growing conditions and so you will find they grow better for you and that is what I have done with *Erythronium sibiricum*. Originally *Erythronium sibiricum* tried to open its flowers before the stem pushed them above the ground so we never enjoyed the flowers now they flower on a stem as they should.



Erythronium sibiricum



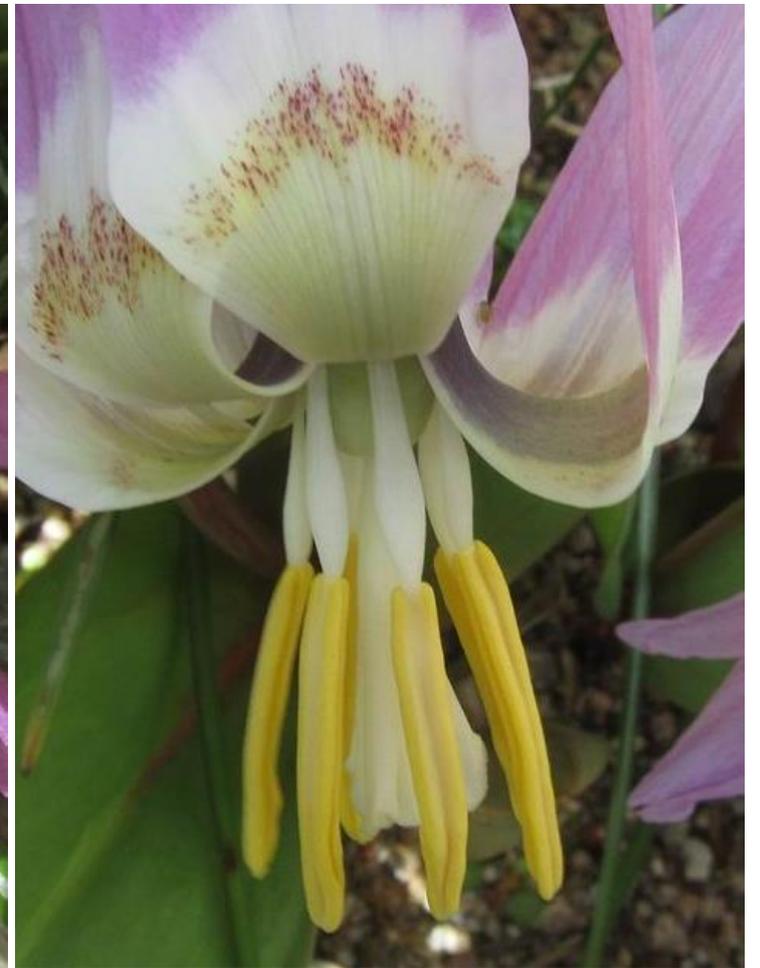
Erythronium sibiricum



Erythronium sibiricum (krylovii?)



Erythronium sibiricum



Erythronium sibiricum (krylovii?)

Over the years I noted differences in the plants of *Erythronium sibiricum* I was growing from the various original seed sources - the form I have suggested may be *E. krylovii* flowers earlier, has plain green leaves as well as differences in the flower, filaments and style. From correspondence with friends who have seen these plants in the wild I thought that this form had been named as *Erythronium krylovii* but it seems that the paper on *E. krylovii* states it has only white flowers. There are a number of papers describing new species and subspecies from the *Erythronium sibiricum* complex these include *E. altaicum*, *krylovii*, *sajanense* and *sulevii*. As most of the original papers are in Russian it will take me a while to work out exactly what they refer to and what is considered to be the correct name of the plants we are growing. We should never let uncertainty over the correct names get in the way of enjoying beautiful plants.

Having raised lots of plants from seed allows us to cover the ground with a succession of flowering periods in the same space. We also encourage plants to naturalise by allowing them to shed their seeds and germinate around the parent. Here you will see *Erythronium* 'Craigton Cover Girl' in happy colour harmony with a chance self-sown hellebore.



***Erythronium*
'Craigton
Cover Girl'**

It was in a group of self-sown, and so open-pollinated plants, in our garden that I first spotted *Erythronium* 'Craigton Cover Girl' - this hybrid quickly stood out from the other seedlings because of its ability to form clumps. One bulb forms a clump this size in five years.



This **Trillium kurabayashii** was also raised from seed and planted out as a group of seedlings.



Fritillaria tubiformis



Again seed raised forms of **Fritillaria tubiformis** display variation.



Fritillaria montana and **Fritillaria tortifolia**



Fritillaria obliqua



Mostly seed raised plants in this bed, all except *Anemone ranunculoides*, in the bottom left corner, which has never set seed for us but it does increase well by means of its spreading, branching, underground stem.



Muscari latifolia and Narcissus cyclamineus



All the plants in the bulb house sand bed are seed raised - **Narcissus bulbocodium, Muscari sp. and Tecophilaea.**



Narcissus bulbocodium

This is a particularly nice short form of *Narcissus bulbocodium*; its leaves lie flat on the ground and most of the bulbs have produced two flower stems – it is also flowering later than many of the other forms of this species we grow.

I made a short [Video Diary Supplement](#) from this bed.



Tristagma leichtlinii

Raising plants from seed has given me the opportunity to try plants that might not be available to buy as bulbs such as *Tristagma leichtlinii*. The bulbs raised from the original seed, collected in South America, produced seed for us so we have managed to greatly increase the number of bulbs allowing us to both share it around and to try it outside where so far it has proved hardy. This is a third generation pot of seedling bulbs which when they go dormant in the summer are destined to be planted out in a number of spots in troughs and raised beds.



I have also raised all these forms of *Tecophilaea cyanocrocus* from seed. Whether we get a seed set or not depends on the weather conditions - if it is sunny and warm when they are in flower we get seed if it turns cold and damp it is less likely that we will get seed. I do go round the flowers pollinating them with a paint brush small enough to allow me to push it down into the centre of the flower then I give the brush a twist before moving to the next flower.



Tecophilaea cyanocrocus - note there is very little in the way of a central white zone.



Typical ***Tecophilaea cyanocrocus* var. *leichtlinii*** has a distinct white zone in the throat, I do not know if there is a precise definition of how much white there has to be before you call it *T. cyanocrocus* var. *leichtlinii* but this one certainly falls into that description.



Over the years of raising from our own seed I have selected and named a few forms of **Tecophilaea cyanocrocus var leichtlinii** – this one is **Tecophilaea ‘Craigton Cloud’**.



Tecophilaea cyanocrocus var violacea



Cochlearia danica

It is not only the rare plants from foreign lands that I am attracted to - here is a common native plant mostly of the seaside but now commonly seen growing in great profusion along gravel reservation areas of dual carriageways - I gathered some seed of Cochlearia danica last year at the Aberdeen seashore and scattered it onto some of the troughs and here are the first flowers.



I did not raise these Saxifragas from seed but acquired them all as small plants. Many of this type of saxifrage do not set seed for us- whether it is because they are hybrids or it is that they do not like our weather I do not know however I increase them by taking cuttings.





To keep a good well stocked garden it is very important that you continually propagate all the plants you grow and taking cuttings is the way to increase either those that do not set seed very freely or to increase a good clone. This is a nice selection of *Primula marginata* called 'Napoleon' - it has become a bit leggy in this trough and needs trimming back.

***Primula marginata* 'Napoleon'**



It may look drastic to cut some of the plants back to just a tiny bit of stem like this but it will re-bud and be nice and compact again for a number of years. This is at least the third time that I have cut back the plants in this trough, you will notice that I have left some round the outside to give some colour – these I will cut back next year by which time the ones I have cut this year will be well clothed in leaves again.



Of course I do not waste the trimmings; they have produced a whole box of cuttings which will root during the spring and be ready for planting out or potting on either in autumn or next spring.



All the plants in our drive way have grown from scattered seed and as you can see our weather continues to be variable with all types of showers mixed with spells of sunshine however the air temperature remains below the average even for this time of year and there is another cold blast expected this weekend.....