



BULB LOG 50.....13th December 2017





Those of you who live within a continental climatic area must wonder why we go on about the weather all the time. Since I commented on our very changeable conditions last week we went from freezing winter conditions under snow back to milder autumn conditions only to return to an even deeper freeze a few days later. Compare this scene (left) as it looks just now with how it looked a four days earlier in the picture below.



Gales from across the Atlantic swept away all of last week's snow and also brought down all the autumn coloured Acer leaves which now form a golden carpet across the beds.



For years we unsuccessfully tried to establish some of the early flowering forms of *Galanthus nivalis* (reginae-olgae) but none survived more than a year in our open garden until we received a few bulbs that we were assured would survive. Sure enough they have proven hardy for a number of years increasing slowly from the single bulbs that were planted into small clumps. We have not had a severe winter in recent years and I hope when we do these will continue to thrive and flower in December.



During the autumn days of the week I was out lifting the leaves from the paths, and some of the beds, using one of those leaf-vacs that also shreds the leaves as it lifts them.

In some beds I would leave the leaves but where I know there are self-seeding *Eranthis* and other early growers I do lift them. If left the leaves get wet and compact into a laminated layer that the early

germinating seedling growth cannot penetrate and so they perish.



Once lifted the leaves are shredded enough so they break down more quickly and do not form that impenetrable laminated layer so I put them back down as a mulch.



Some plants remain green though the winter like a number of the ferns.



I have always pondered whether or not to cut off the old leaves of evergreen ferns such as **Asplenium scolopendrium** and if it makes any difference. Having done a few trials I have discovered that it you get better new growth if you remove the old leaves.

I like to leave the leaves for the winter then cut them off in January/February this then encourages the new growth.



The fallen leaves can cover those of the Cyclamen preventing them getting light so it is best to remove the golden Acer leaves.



The leaves of **Podophyllum versipelle 'Spotty Dotty'** are slow to get knocked back by the cold - these are in a slightly protected site under a conifer tree.



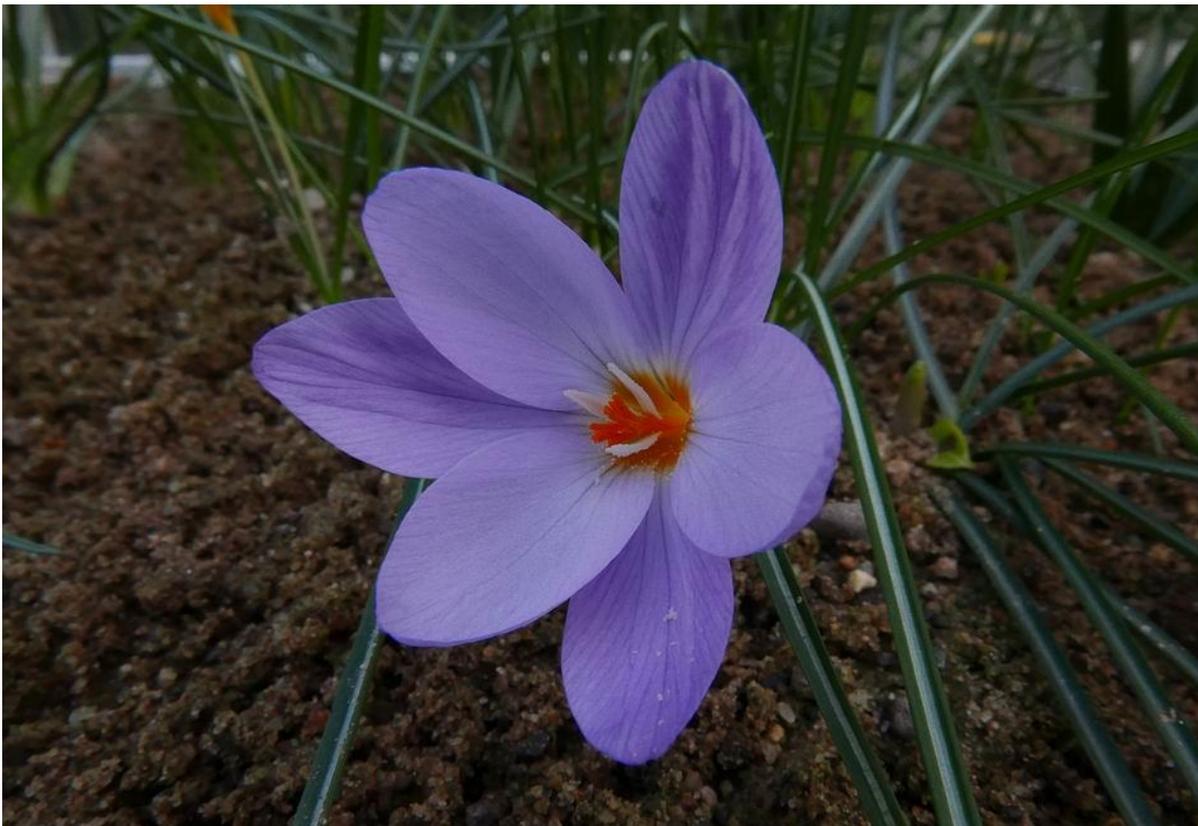
The new leaves of **Corydalis 'Craigton Purple'** are tough and will survive through the winter here it is growing beside **Geranium robertianum**.



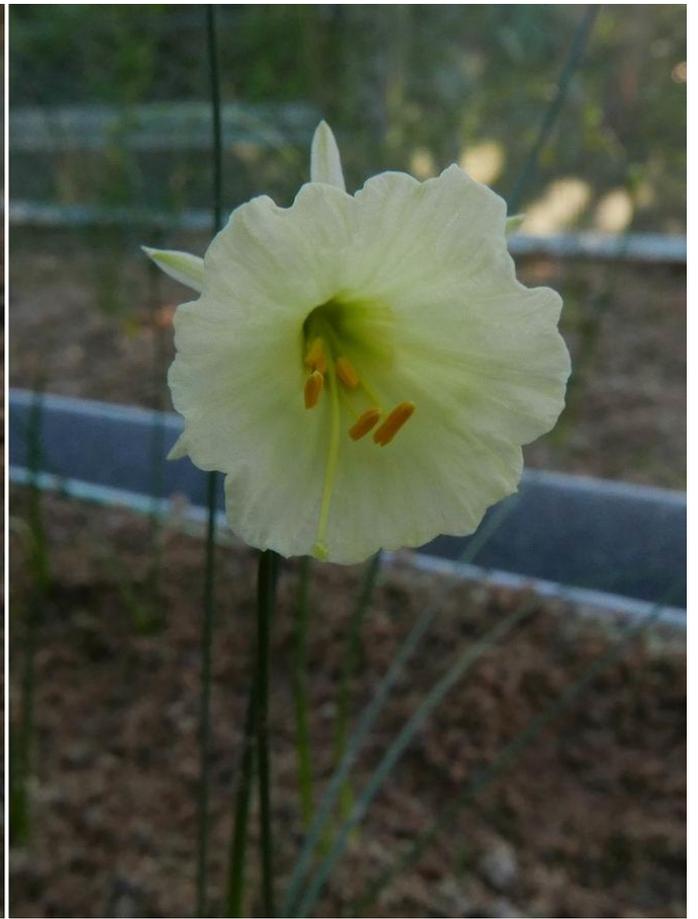
These fallen leaves are from a seed raised **Rhododendron yunnanense** which loses its leaves in their second year, this year's leaves remain on the shrub and will drop this time next year.



While down lifting leaves and doing a bit of weeding at the same time I was able to enjoy this scene where the silver leaved seedlings of **Cyclamen hederifolium** blend well with the silver **Saxifraga federici augusti** , all self-seeding down these blocks of tufa. Yes behind all that green growth of moss are large lumps of tufa, I stopped trying to keep them moss free a long time ago – now the plants seed around better than they did in the bare tufa.



During a brief spell in the sunshine the temperature in a bulb house rose enough to entice this **Crocus laevigatus** flower to open.



A seedling from **Narcissus romieuxii** growing in a sand bed has a nice frilled flange to the corona.



Here a more typical form of **Narcissus romieuxii** again a seedling in one of the sand beds.



This *Narcissus romieuxii* hybrid, also growing in a sand bed, was planted a few years ago as a single bulb now it has three stems.



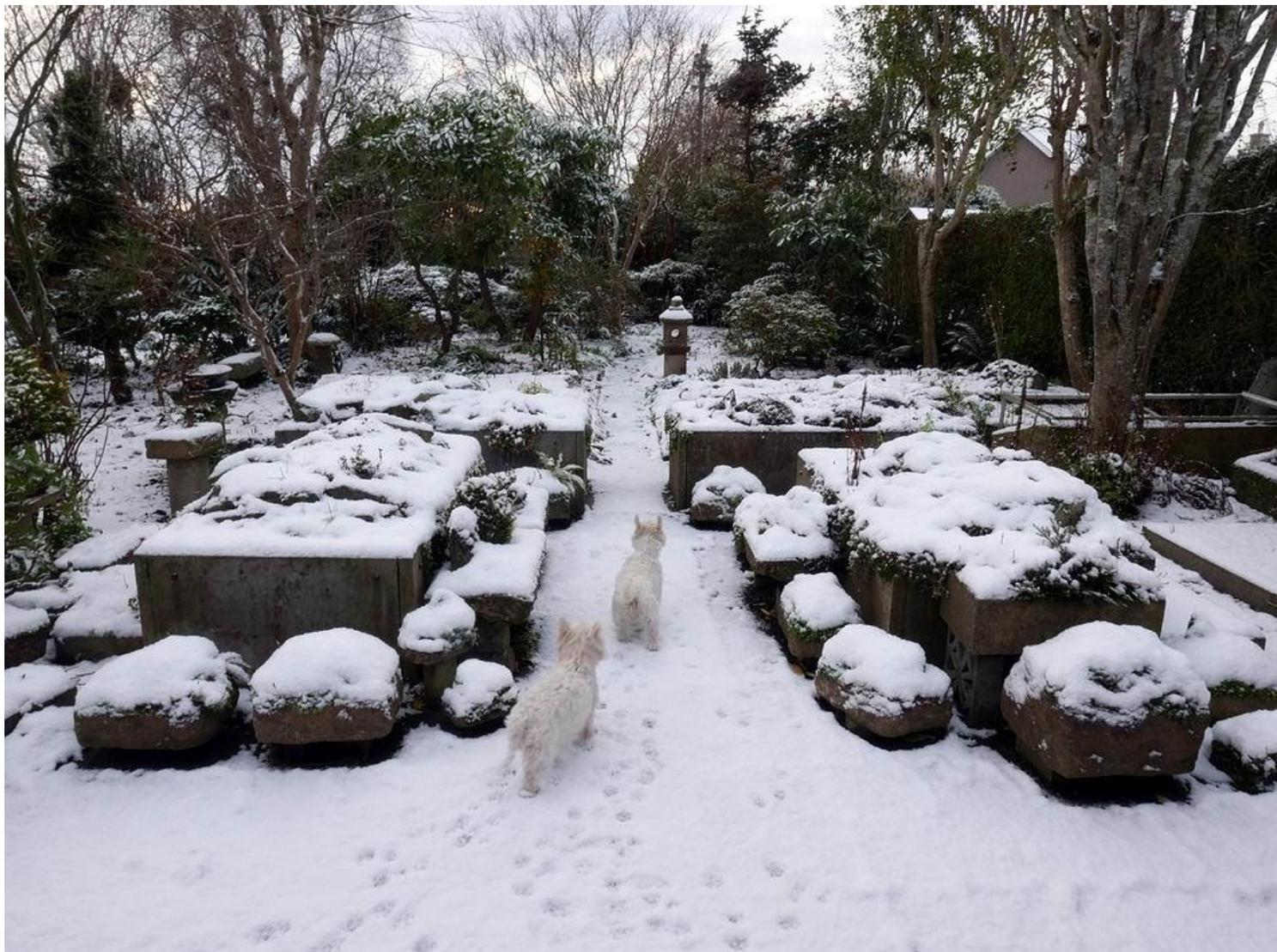
Having enjoyed a few nice days working in the garden the weather changed back to winter but this time colder.



In this bulb house sand bed the temperature is -5.1C.



In another sand bed where the warming cable had been triggered it was not quite so cold minus 3 at the edge, which is more exposed, and -0.6 in the middle.



View across the slab beds and troughs.



A clump of Bowles's golden grass, *Milium effusum* 'Aureum', makes a bold statement in the snow.



The grass seeded in a crack between the slabs, or Cousin Itt as we call it, also makes a statement under the snow. (Cousin Itt is a fictional character in the Addams Family series for those old enough to remember.)



Previous versions of Cousin Itt were wearing an autumn scarf and with its hair lifted revealing a face.



These leaves of *Arum italicum* subsp. *italicum* 'Marmoratum' only emerged recently and are perfectly hardy surviving being frozen and thawed out several times every winter.



Corydalis 'Craigton Blue' leaves are flattened under the snow these also survive all that our winter brings unlike the taller withered stem and leaves of *Corydalis chaerophylla* in the centre which die back underground for the winter.

Some views only reveal themselves in the winter when the garden is stripped back to the structural elements.



The red peeling bark of *Acer griseum* stands out in the snowy landscape behind the pond.



Sculpture
with tangle
of Pieris
stems.



View

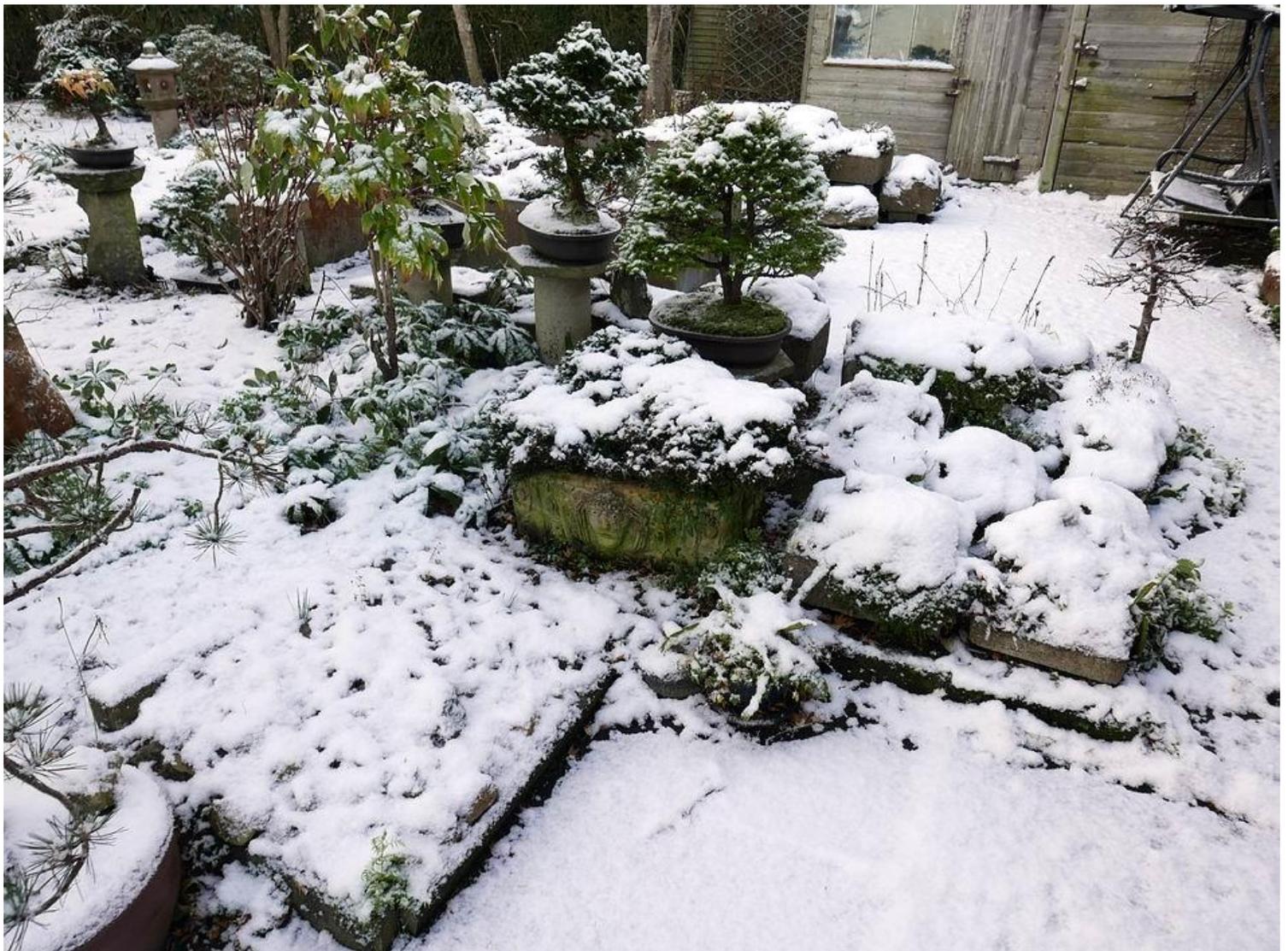


View framed by Pieris stems.





We are used to speaking about the maximum and minimum temperatures of the garden and must remember that figure is generally the air temperature however sampling the temperature at ground level in various parts of the garden reveals a different story of varying temperatures.



The cold conditions are forecast to continue at least until the end of the week.....