



BULB LOG 06.....8<sup>th</sup> February 2017





I was thinking that an alternative title for this week could be ‘The return of the hoops’, as we are approaching the peak flowering time of this beautiful winter flowering group of Narcissus. As you can see the bulb houses are full of their delightful flowers so why the return? Well, regular readers will remember that a few years ago I was distracted and a bit casual in my attention to watering and feeding the pots in the bulb house. While I had provided sufficient water for the Narcissus to survive I had not given them the copious amount of water they needed at critical times of their growth which caused smaller bulbs and a lack of flower bud production. As a result last year we had fewer flowers than I am used to seeing. Having learned my lesson I paid more attention reverting to my long-proved watering and feeding regime last winter and now one year on I get my reward with a lovely mass flowering again.



This weekend we were frost free so I was out with my watering cans, as our outside water is still turned off, watering the pots showing growth, I am doing this on average every second week when the weather is not freezing or there is excessive damp in the air. I add about quarter to half strength tomato-type liquid plant food to each watering can.



The cover picture is of this fine large **Narcissus romieuxii** seedling which has a flat petunioid corona, growing in a small pot of seedlings.

As you can see in these pictures there is nothing wrong with the other seedlings they are also fine forms but it is the petunioid clone that I am going to separate out for appraising. In many ways it resembles the form that Jim Archibald named 'Julia Jane' from his original JCA805 collection although as the seed was from open pollinated flowers it could have some hybrid genes.



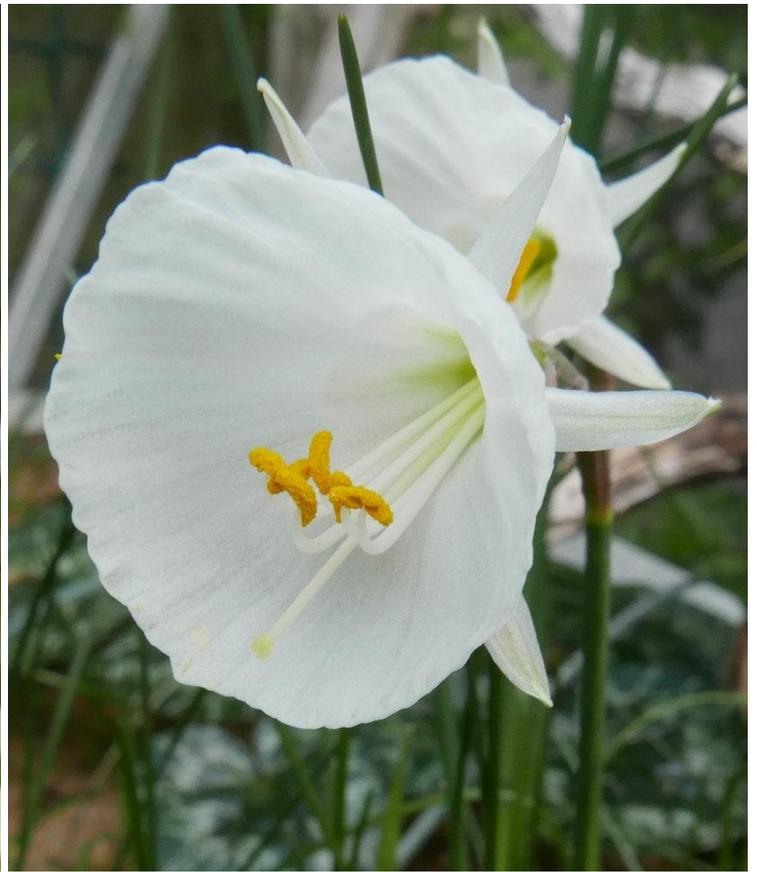
This is my pot of **Narcissus romieuxii JCA 805** which was raised from that original introduction – we received some bulbs from the late Harold Esselmont and have kept them going by the bulbs ever since. I would speculate that the good number of *Narcissus romieuxii* forms and hybrids that we all grow are related to the JCA805 introduction. The JCA 805 collection had a wide genetic variation – some of the forms raised from the original seed were less tolerant of cultivation and dwindled those that were more adaptable are the ones that persist to this day. Subsequent seed raised bulbs from the original and subsequent sowings also display a wide variation especially if hybridised.



**Narcissus romieuxii seedlings ex JCA 805**



**Narcissus bulbocodium**



**Narcissus hybrid**



**Narcissus bulbocodium hybrid**



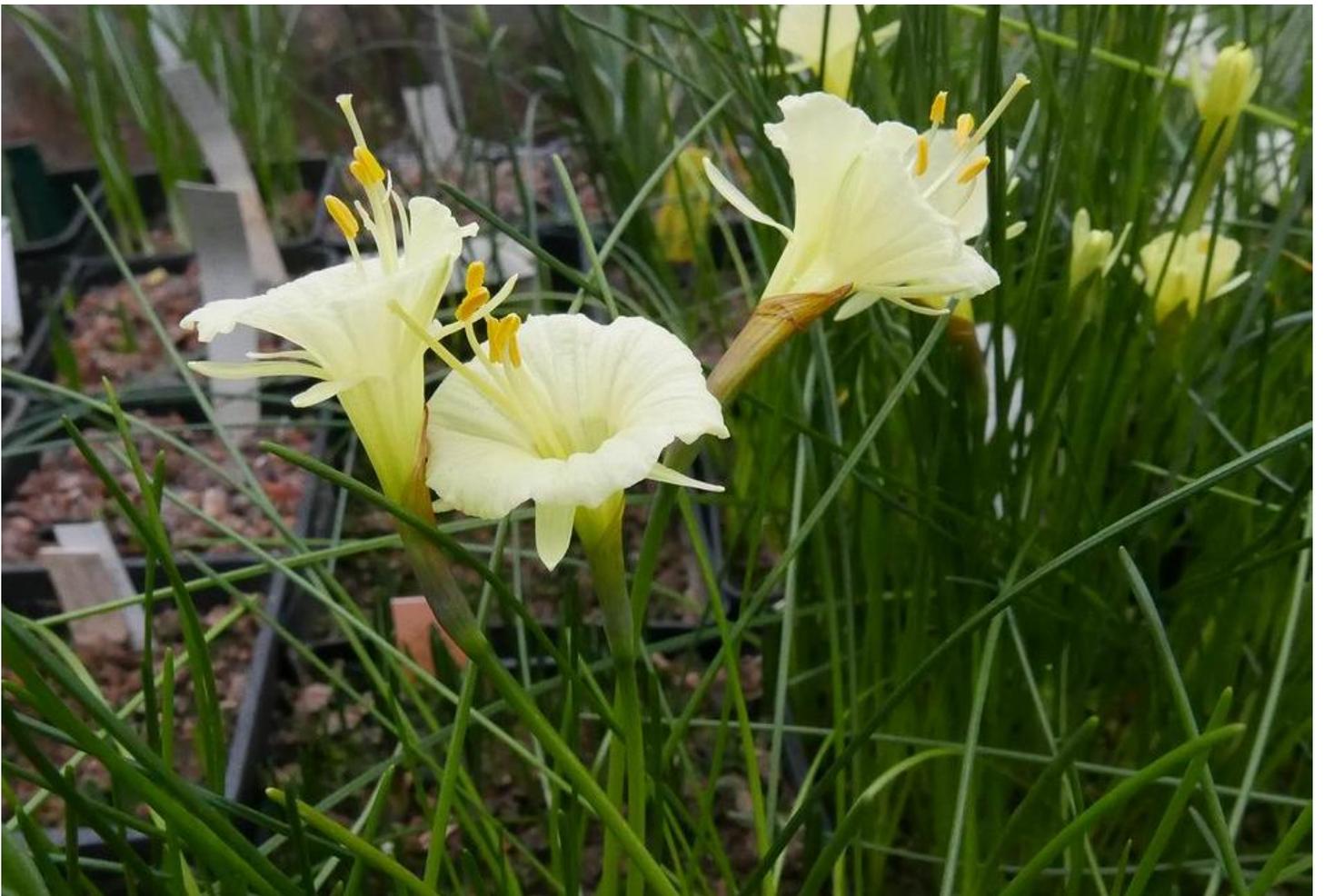
**Narcissus romieuxii**

It seems that all the Hoop Petticoat Narcissus will inter breed with each other and indeed with many other species outside this section – especially when they are grown close together in such a small space as our bulb houses.

Some years I will endeavour to pollinate certain of the species or forms, such as JCA805, in an attempt to maintain young healthy plants with a pure line to the original collection but now I mostly like to encourage them in their promiscuity with my paint brush moving between my favourite forms.



**Narcissus romieuxii** seedling with a petunioid corona and very exerted style and stamens.



**Narcissus romieuxii riffanus** tends towards upward facing flowers with exerted style and stamens.



**Narcissus romieuxii subsp. albidus**



**Narcissus 'Craigton Clumper'**

I selected and named 'Craigton Clumper' from a group of *Narcissus romieuxii* seedlings because of the remarkable speed at which the bulbs increased.



**Narcissus bulbocodium**



Because there are no flying insects at this time of year it is up to me to transfer the pollen on to the stigma when it is ripe.

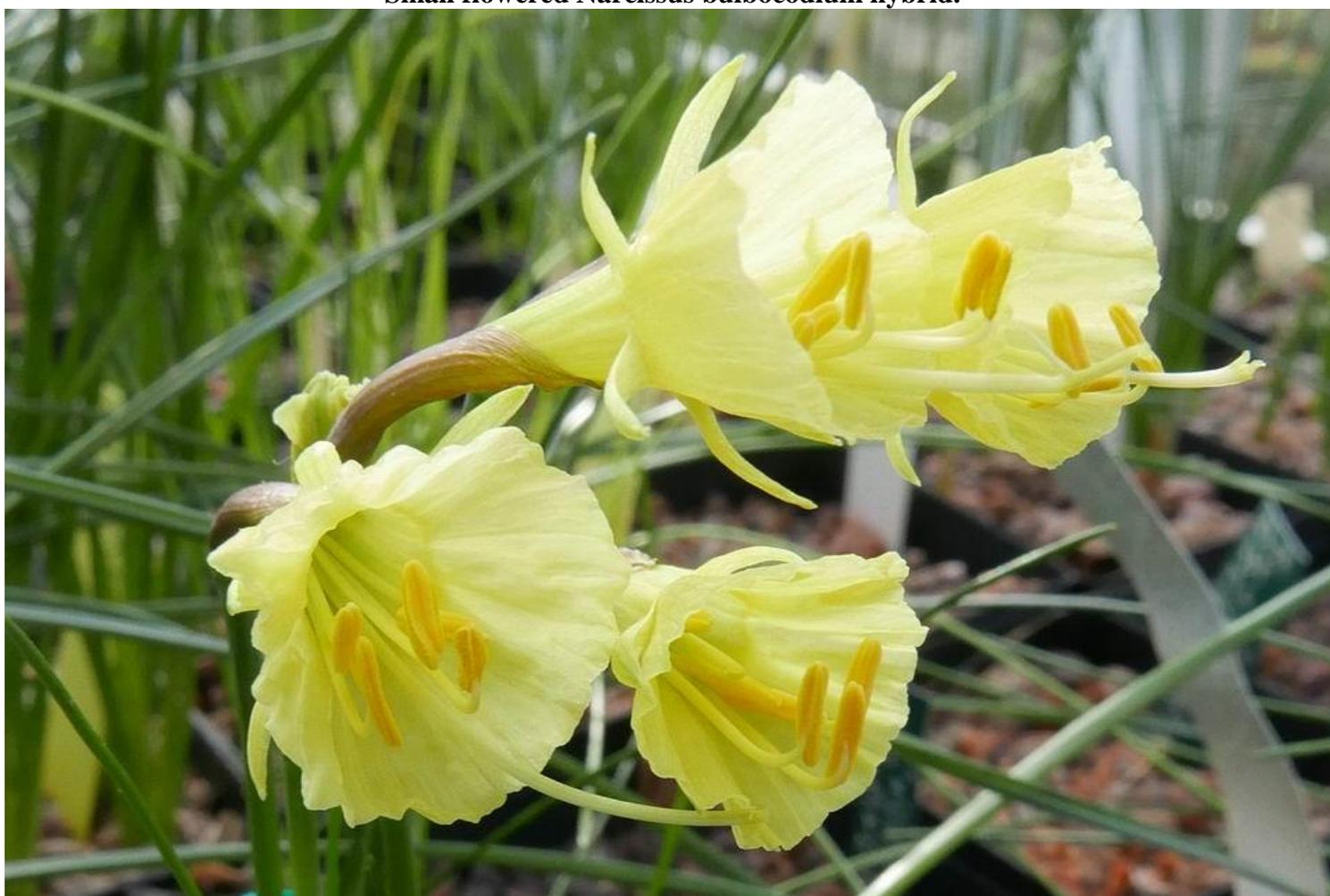


These Narcissus seedlings are from a single seed capsule on an open pollinated Narcissus bulbocodium hybrid and show a large degree of variation in growth and appearance.

I am especially drawn to the smaller flowered one both because of its dainty features and the fact that it has increased to four flowering stems while the other larger form has only produced two stems in the same time. I will now clone out the smaller one to see if the good rate of increase will continue – see more pictures of its flowers below.



**Small flowered *Narcissus bulbocodium* hybrid.**





**Narcissus 'Craigton Compact'**

I have decided that I will name this short stemmed hybrid Narcissus 'Craigton Compact' and will send some bulbs to a few friends in the summer for them to trial.



**Narcissus 'Craigton Compact'**



Random species and hybrids planted in the sand bed are a great delight as well as being less work for me because I do not need to replot them every year.





The next series of pictures are views taken anti clockwise around the bulb house sand bed.



Bulb house sand bed.



Bulb house sand bed.





Bulb house sand bed.



Here is my quick and simple guide to growing the hoop petticoat Narcissus.



1<sup>st</sup> of September: apply first watering (storm) taking care to ensure the pots are thoroughly soaked all the way through.

1<sup>st</sup> of October: one month later apply second full watering to all pots.

The ideal timing of the first and second watering's will vary depending on your local weather, in warmer areas it could be up to a month later before you apply the first storm.

Do not allow the pots to dry out completely.

Water individual pots relative to the amount of leaf growth, the more leaves the more water is needed. It is better to apply a flood of water allowing the pots to almost dry out before repeating the flood than it is to add a dribble of water every day.

The frequency of watering will again depend on your temperatures also on your potting mix, the type of pot (clay or plastic) and the number of bulbs in a pot.

Add dilute tomato type liquid fertiliser at half to quarter recommended strength to each watering until leaves and or flowers are completely formed.



When the flowers start to fade, generally in March in our garden, switch to a potassium rich fertiliser, I apply a small pinch of a powdered form of potassium to the surface of each pot which is taken into solution as I water.

If the plants grow on long enough I may repeat the potassium.

Once the flowering is over the bulbs switch to growing seed if they have been successfully fertilised and also to forming next year's flowers – for this they require potassium.

Watering can now be slowly reduced as the plants only need to replace the liquid they lose through transpiration and evaporation when you notice the growth starting to yellow it is time to allow the pots to slowly dry out.



Collect seed and store in packets of dry sand in shaded ambient temperatures over the summer. **DO NOT PUT IT IN THE FRIDGE** this will stop the development of the seeds.

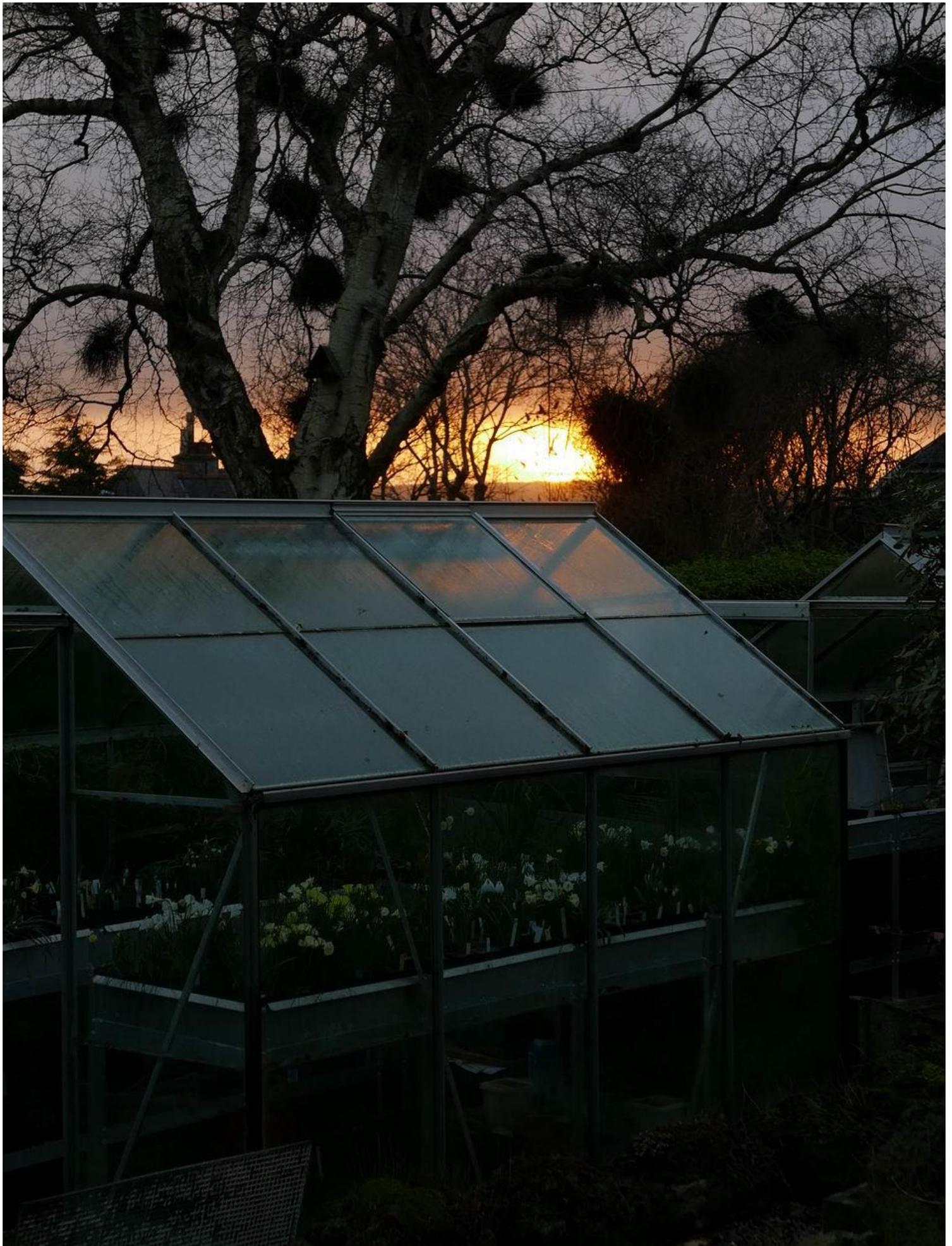
In August start sowing the seeds deeply (3-6cms) ready to be watered with the first storm on 1<sup>st</sup> September.



Keep the pots dry over the summer allowing them to get the warmth required for the flower buds to fully develop.

Ideally replot every year in the summer when the bulbs are resting. Repot the bulbs into a dry well drained potting mix over the summer, I would like to replot all my bulbs on the last day of August but that is not possible so I start working through them from July.





The sunrises over the bulb houses to herald another exciting day of new Narcissus flowers opening join me in the latest [Bulb Log Video Diary where I Celebrate of the Hoops](#).....

Stop press - the first shoots are appearing in the open garden walk with me [Bulb Log Video Diary –first shoots](#)