



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 10.....7th March 2018





As forecast the cold blast from the north east hit us last Wednesday and continues as I start to write this week's Bulb Log. Many of you will be experiencing similar or worse conditions as this unseasonably cold blast has hit much of Europe and Scandinavia. It is not unusual to get snow in Aberdeen at this time of year and often well into May but it is the strong, bitterly cold winds that have made this episode so bad.



Snow piles up against the troughs.



It is easy to see and appreciate the structural plants and features when the garden is under snow.





Iris flowers slowly disappeared as the snow built up and some suffered physical damage mostly from the wind.



As the snow continued to fall I could see less of the Eranthis flowers until they were completely covered.





Apart from taking pictures the snow has prevented me from doing any work in the garden this week so with the addition of some thoughts on the hardiness of plants, this week's Bulb Log is a photo essay of the snowy garden.



Gardeners are always asking or discussing the hardiness of plants but what exactly do we mean by that? There is no simple binary answer the hardiness of a plant is very complicated with many variable parameters. I have been involved in many discussions where someone from the milder south states that a plant is not hardy while I comment that here in the colder north it is perfectly hardy. One of the reasons behind this is that plants come into growth much earlier in the south and are often caught by late frosts whereas because our average temperatures are lower such plants do not come into growth so early. Recent postings I have seen suggest that the growth in many gardens in the warmer south is four to six weeks ahead of ours.

The stage of growth of a plant can seriously affect its hardiness - still dormant plants can survive a lot of cold but once they are in active growth they can be damaged by even the slightest of frosts.

The moisture level in the soil and the plants is another parameter : well-hydrated plants in wet soil are also more likely to succumb to freezing while the same plants kept on the dry side are more likely to survive.

A good covering of snow will help protect the plants from extreme frosts provided the snow comes first.

The rate at which plants freeze and defrost is also a major factor where the most damaging effect is caused when frozen plants warm up suddenly.

With the warming drier summers experienced down south in recent years many gardeners have been tempted to grow plants more suited to a Mediterranean type climate and while such plants have grown well for a number of years I fear that they will suffer a number of losses this winter.

When I have been asked if a plant is hardy I will often qualify by saying, it is hardy over one, five, or ten years depending on our weather cycle. Up until this year we have experienced a series of mild winters without deep frosts allowing many plants to flourish for several years then along comes a winter with a sting and cuts down all those plants that cannot tolerate frosts. It may be several years before we get another cold winter or we could get a series of them in a row which will influence the plants we can grow.

As we live in the colder northern part of the country we have tended towards growing mostly proven hardy plants the exception to this would be some of the bulbs in pots and the sand beds under glass – I am hopeful that they will recover from the experience of this past week.

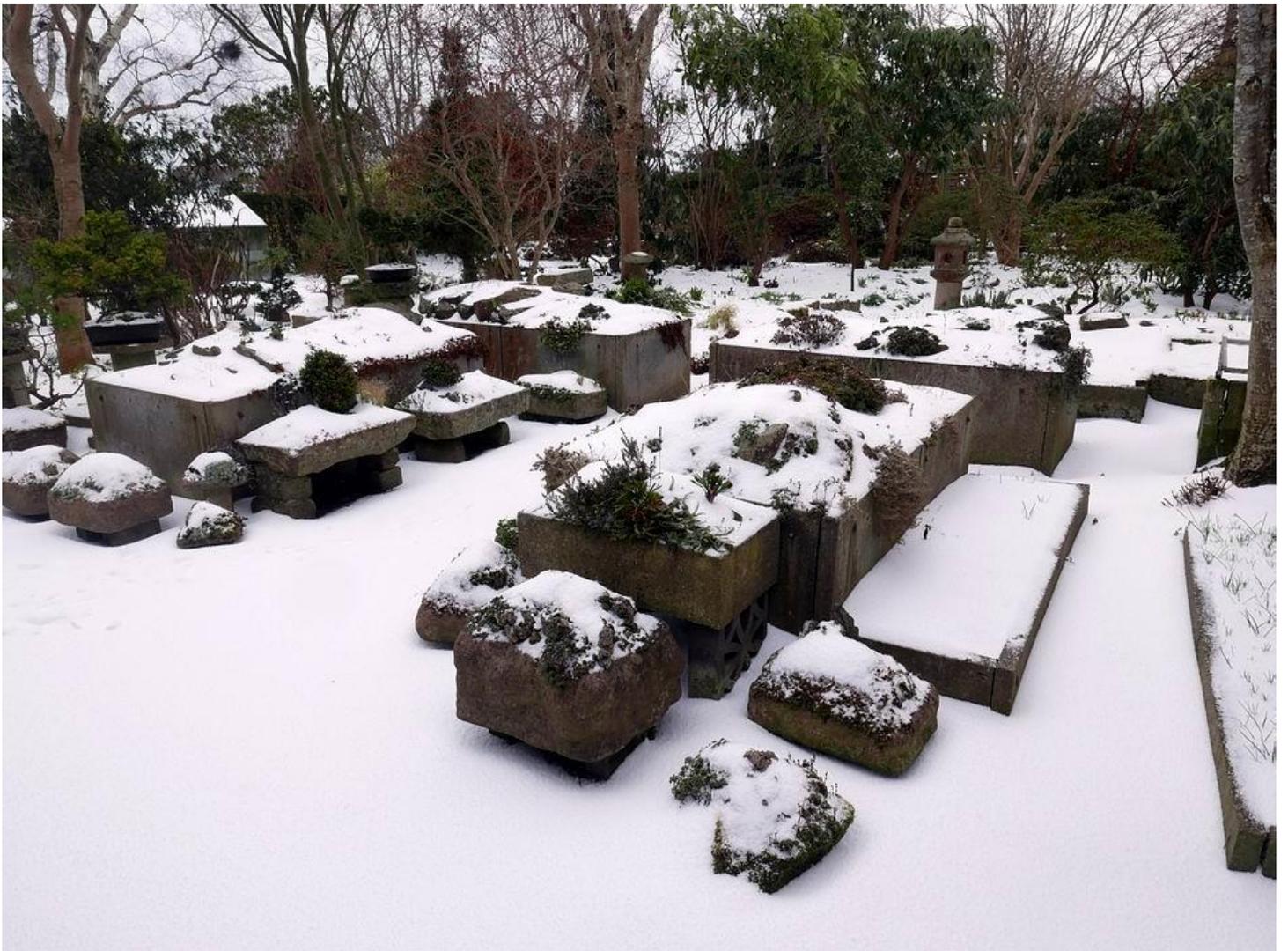
For many years I have advocated raising generations of plants from seeds collected in your own garden I call this 'climate shifting' where natural selection will result in each subsequent generation becoming more adapted to your weather and growing conditions .

I hope this set back will not deter gardeners from trying to extend the range of plants they grow we should always be pushing the boundaries and exploring the wide range of plants that are available especially from the seed exchanges.





Bonsai and troughs provide interest whatever the weather.

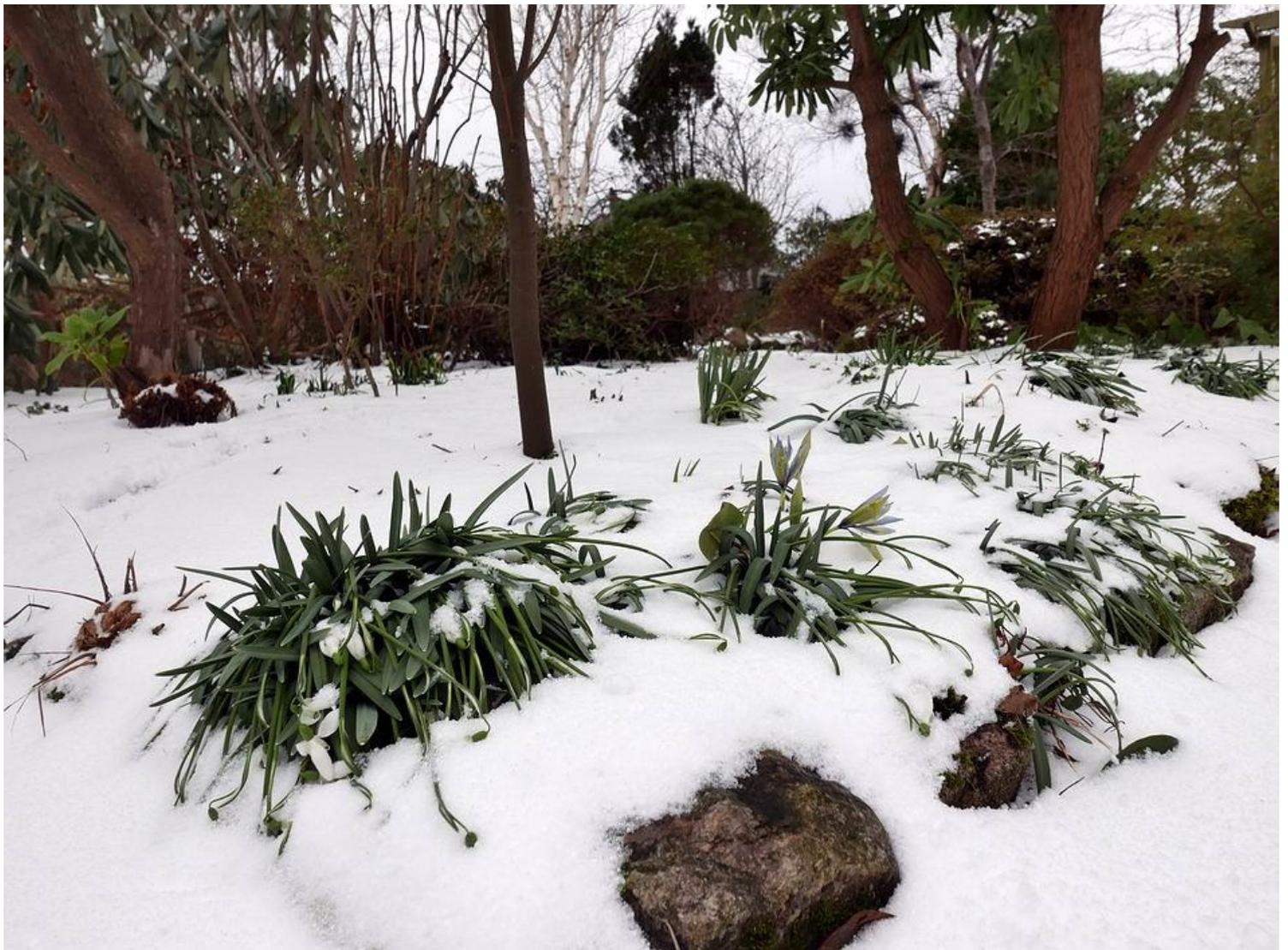


Troughs and slab beds





Last week I featured pictures of some **Galanthus** in the bulb bed along with those in the adjacent bed (below) enjoying the sunshine – it is a very different scene now.





The **Leucojum** stems collapse in the snow but will recover.



Galanthus



Crocus atticus



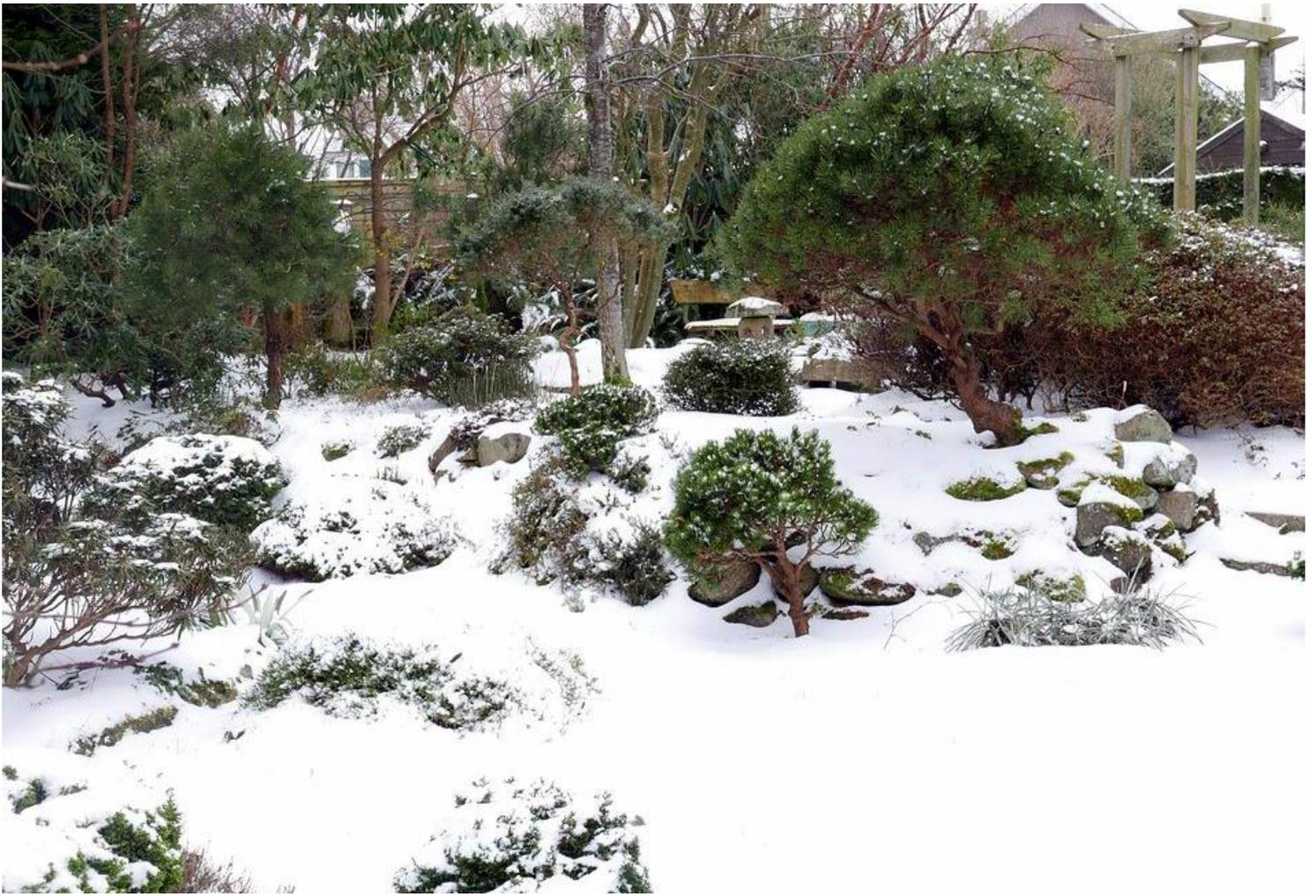
A collapsed lily stem from last year with empty seed pods blown over by the winds.



Sculpture



Evergreen shrubs are an essential element and should be included in all gardens.



Walls





Rhododendrons

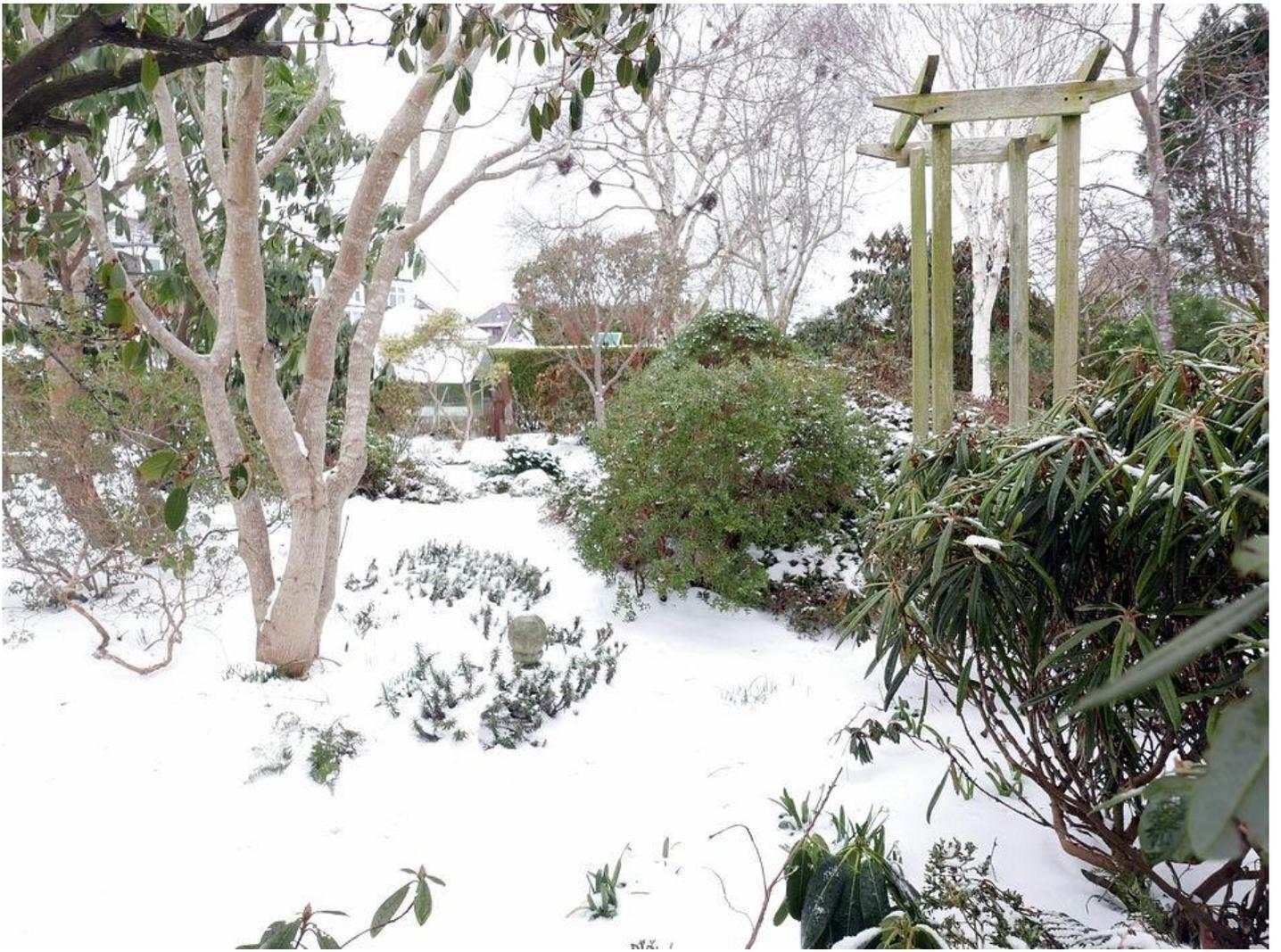




Pines and Celmisia



Pond





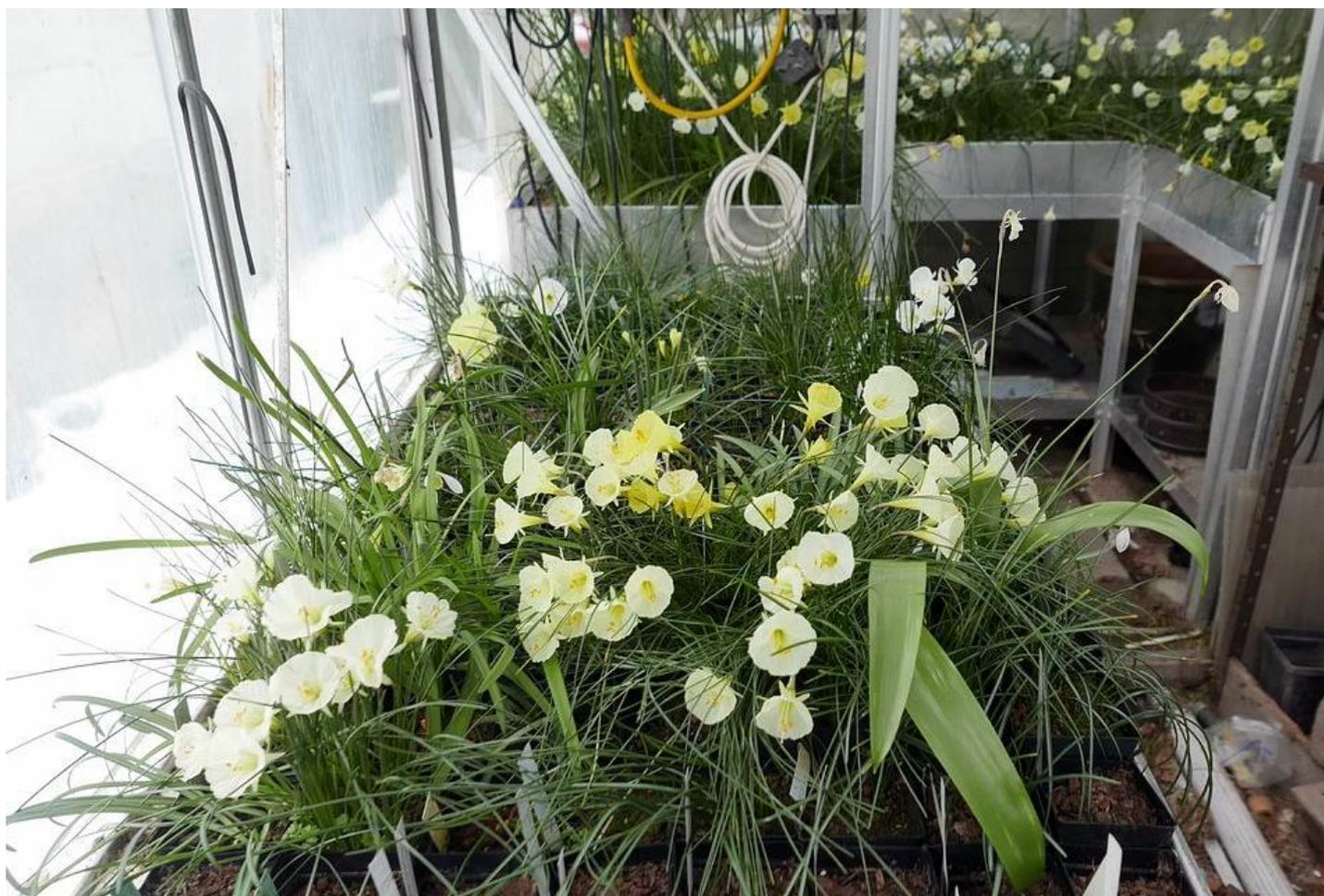
In the unheated bulb houses everything is frozen however because the cold has not lasted too long everything should survive. I have warming cables buried in the sand to help prevent the freezing penetrating down to the bulbs.



The temperature in the bulb house at mid-day when I took this picture was -6°C and the sand was frozen.



Frozen pots of bulbs.



Looking across the 7cm pots towards the 'U' shaped sand bed during the freeze.



It is commonly said that all gardens look the same under snow a saying that I do not agree with, a garden with good structure will look better in any conditions. Click the link to see the garden under snow [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#).