



BULB LOG 10.....10th March 2021



Crocus sieberi sieberi



Taking pictures of the bulbs growing in the sand beds presents many of the same problems you encounter when capturing images of them in the wild. Firstly I am restricted in the angle I can approach them from and then there are all the other leaves and growths that get in front of them. I find myself doing a similar degree of 'gardening' a term that will be familiar to anyone who has taken pictures of plants in the wild which refers to trying to clean up the view into the subject by bending other leaves in the hope they will stay out of the view for long enough to capture the image. Having spent many an hour trying I am now comfortable with the fact that it is not possible to get the

same type of plant portrait with these plants as I could with a subject growing in a pot that can be staged – in fact I rather like the way this view is closer to the natural way you might see some of these plants in habitat. When it is closed this **Crocus sieberi sieberi** displays beautifully contrasting colours where a dull yellow tube leads up to the rich purple and white outer segments of the closed flower.



When it warms up enough then the beautiful white, orange and golden colours of **Crocus sieberi** flowers are fully revealed.



There are slight variations across these seedlings and I just love the very flamboyant orange stigma seen most clearly in the cover picture.



The close relative **Crocus atticus** which for some time was considered to be a subspecies of *Crocus sieberi* thrives in these sand bed conditions.



Crocus atticus has also proven to be a very hardy and successful crocus in our garden where it has grown and increased over many decades.



Crocus abantensis grows well outside in the gritty soils of the raised slab beds where it slowly increases.



Many other crocus such as these **Crocus chrysanthus** hybrids were encouraged to open their flowers during the few days of warm sunshine



This spreading group of **Crocus tommasinianus** started out as a small pot of seedlings that I planted close to the rocks on the right hand side, since increased by both seed and division.



While it is nice to see clumps of bulbs forming I much prefer to see them spaced out in a more naturalistic type of planting like this group which mainly consists of **Crocus tommasinianus** at the moment with others still to open.



It is a similar naturalistic type of planting that I am trying to achieve in the bulb house sand beds.

Because of the mixture of plants the naturalistic style in the sand beds, as in the rest of the garden, is far removed from anything you might see in the wild but it is my attempt to get away from pots, formal beds and specimen planting styles and instead to encourage the plants to grow as they would in nature moving around by self-seeding, forming associations and mixed plant colonies.



There are a few ***Iris reticulata*** that I raised from wild seed growing in the sand beds.



Iris reticulata



Outside we have a narrow bed where some of the *Iris reticulata* cultivars have grown well for many years even though they get a bit chewed by the slugs.



**Iris reticulata
cultivars.**



To further the naturalistic style we like to have the bulbs growing through suitable ground cover plants as well as the natural mulches and not rising up from just bare ground. Here a mulch of leaves will slowly turn green as the low growing *Adoxa moschatellina* starts into growth – it is one of a number of wild flowers that we use as ground cover in the beds.



Snowdrops and Iris form a background for the deep warm yellow flowers of *Crocus herberti* which spreads by stolons.



Iris 'Sheila Ann Germany'



Iris 'Katherine Hodgkin'



Rock Garden Bed



With so many early bulbs flowering in the garden it would be easy for me to fill the Bulb Log with pictures only taken outside but for now I am heading back to the Bulb house.



**Narcissus and
Crocus**
flowering in the
sand bed.



I learned a lot from this the original bulb house sand bed such as how well many of the bulbs grew to the extent that with the current growth it is a bit like a Narcissus jungle. Through the winter we enjoyed the mass flowering of the Narcissus but for now the leaves and stems have grown so well that they are flopping over and I will need to part them a bit to allow the next wave of flowers to get through.



With that experience I was more restrained when planting the sand bed in the other bulb house allowing the bulbs more space so it would take longer for them to get to the crowded state.



Crocus and Narcissus.



Narcissus eualbidus



Narcissus eualbidus



Narcissus cantabricus

Narcissus 'Don Stead' is a hybrid between *Narcissus bulbocodium* x *N. cantabricus* raised by and named after the late Don Stead, a Scottish rock gardener - it has a short and sturdy stem and the shape of the flowers make it very distinctive.



Narcissus romieuxii 'Julia Jane'

There must be more pots of *Narcissus romieuxii* 'Julia Jane' that are wrongly named than there are of the real thing and the mix up of stocks goes way back over thirty years when we got given several lots of the so called Julia Jane none of which were true to the original selection - we had many pots that we labelled 'Not Julia Jane'. Julia Jane was one of many seedlings arising from the Jim Archibald JCA 805 introduction and it should have pale yellow petunioid flowers with a very flat open corona that rolls back as the flower matures. The mix up could have occurred because of the wide variation of forms that arise from seed raised plants - only vegetatively propagated plants should carry the name.



Narcissus bulbocodium – this one is growing in a pot.



Narcissus bulbocodium



Narcissus bulbocodium



Narcissus romieuxii



Narcissus romieuxii



Narcissus romieuxii



I will round off this week with one more picture of **Iris 'Sheila Ann Germaney'** and a link to the latest [Bulb Log Video Diary Supplement](#) looking around the Bulb Houses.....