



SRGC

# Bulb Log Diary

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Most of what we do as gardeners is represented in the cover image and also in this second view looking at the same area from another angle. We create gardens using plants, rocks and water but the interesting thing we, the gardeners, bring is our creativity and individuality. It would be fascinating to see, given exactly the same materials, what different people would create. My philosophy is to be guided by nature, so rather than creating a garden my aim is to build a landscape full of habitats. The trees are obviously important; both those at full size planted directly in the garden and the ones that are grown in pots as bonsai, such as these around the pond. Rocks both natural and manmade are critical to the garden which is not surprising as we are considered to be rock gardeners. Some rocks such as the one at the front right of the cover picture is cemented to stand upright in a shallow bonsai pot imitating the decorative feature stones often prominent in Japanese gardens which are a big influence on our style. I especially like the way the moss is growing on this small rugged standing rock turning it from the purely decorative into a habitat. It has evolved into a habitat within a habitat because a number of plants, including a *Dactylorhiza* orchid, have seeded into the layer of gravel that fills the shallow container as nature tries to take it over. I have to manage what seeds into this pot regularly removing plants, including trees, that I decide are not suitable and so this container reflects in miniature what happens in the wider garden. The Japanese influence to our garden is further evident in the lantern I made from two upside down, recycled Aberdeen granite paving slabs and a lump of granite which I had two holes drilled through at right angles before I dressed the surface.



While some of the natural stone is there as ornamental features the many manmade cement paving slabs play a more subtle supporting role around the garden where they form the surrounds to the pond, paths, and of course the Slab Beds. Then there are all the rocks, stones and gravel that we used to both build and then landscape the raised beds and troughs.





Outside in the garden the remains of the season's herbaceous growth slowly decays providing foraging habits for the many garden birds. All the old growth will be gradually cleared over the winter in preparation for the much anticipated explosion of growth which, depending on the severity of the cold, could start to emerge as early as February along with the first of the New Year's flowers.



To keep us going until then we will get pleasure from a succession of Narcissus flowering in the bulb houses. The first Narcissus flowers are already in bloom and will be followed by a succession of others giving us flowering interest until May or again, depending on how soon the summer heat arrives, even into early June.





There are two basic habitats in the bulb houses the previous image showing the bulbs growing in pots while the one above shows one of the sand beds where the bulbs are growing directly in the plunges filled with sand.



The Narcissus growing in the sand are all mixed up with no labels so their identity is not always certain, especially since most are hybrids raised from our own seed.





Many of the bulbs we grow as *Narcissus romieuxii* are most likely also hybrids - the original seed having been collected from areas of the Rif and Atlas Mountains of Morocco where it is now understood there are many natural hybrid swarms. This does explain the variation in colour and shape of the many flowers we originally received named as *Narcissus romieuxii*. Then we must add further confusion resulting from all the hybridisation that has gone on between a number of species and hybrids within our small bulb houses.



Variations in the colour of the flower can be deceiving as these two slightly chewed flowers are different clones while the two in the previous picture show the same clone at different stages of growth. Many of the flowers look slightly yellow at first turning to a creamy or pure white as the flower matures.





These two small white upright flowers look superficially similar but when you look at the detail you will see differences most notable the degree to which the style and anthers extend beyond the corona.







There are plenty more flower buds lurking among the leaves and our perpetual problem is that their stems tend to etiolate in our cold temperatures and low winter light before the flowers open.



I often think the test for a good species or named cultivar is could it be easily picked out if they were all mixed up and that is certainly not the case with a lot of these wee Hoop petticoat daffodils.



With the distinct cup shaped corona **Narcissus 'Craigton Chalice'** is one that does stand out among the many growing through the sand beds.



The early flowering **Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister'** is similarly distinct with its large white ruffled corona.





When it first opens **Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister'** has strong green markings on the reverse of the petals down towards the base of the tube these fade a bit as the flower ages.







**Narcissus hybrid**



**Narcissus hybrid**



Returning to the garden where we have used rocks to form this raised wall. The gaps between the rocks also create a habitat that the gardener can exploit if the plants, such as ferns, don't beat us to it. Most of the plants on the top level have gone dormant for the winter leaving an evergreen carpet of leaves provided mostly by **Asarum europaeum** and some ferns.



I have transplanted some of the Asarum and ferns off to the left an area in deep shade below trees and our southern boundary wall.





Looking towards the wall into that deep shade which is a challenging habitat for most plants but there are always some that can tolerate if not thrive in such conditions we just have to find them.



Moving further along the wall, out of the shade, my eye is drawn to a the bright red fruits of **Fuchsia procumbens** another of the many New Zealand natives we grow to add to those I showed last week. I don't know if it is as a result of our warmer drier summer, I suspect it is, but this is the most fruits we have ever had on this plant.





I have also been planting out Cyclamen seedlings in towards the shaded end of the wall.



Following patches of Cyclamen leaves around the garden leads me round to some standing out in the old rock garden bed which is in a transitional state with the fallen leaves and old growth of autumn still to be cleared away.





We don't plant the ferns. Like so much of what grows in the garden they plant themselves we then have to decide if they are compatible with the other plants and bulbs they are growing with to stay there or if they should be removed.



We have been watching this group of plants carefully and might have to remove the fern to allow the Saxifrage to better see the light. We do cut off the fern fronds during the winter then the Saxifrage does most of its growing early before the new fern fronds emerge so when they do they provide some shade preventing the Saxifrage from getting scorched in the sun. To date it has been a beneficial combination but I cannot allow the fern to get too big.



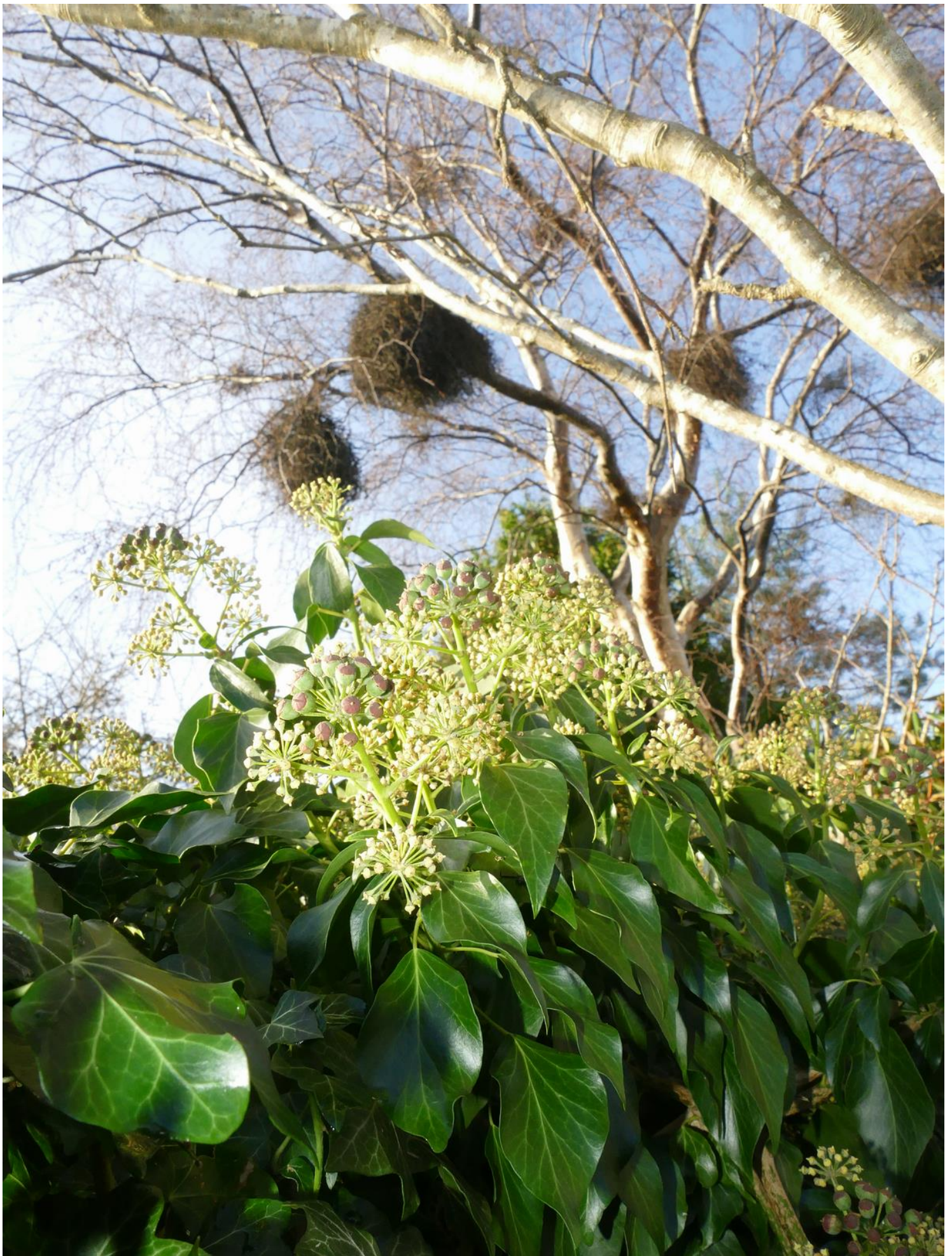


Yet another NZ plant that has been with us for many years is **Ozothamnus (Helichrysum) coralloides**.



The major influences of Nature and Japanese gardens are perhaps most noticeable around the pond area.





This final image of flowering Ivy and Birch nearly made the cover this week. This assemblage of rocks, plants, and water we call our garden provide us with a constant source of amazement, pleasure and education as well as the material to write the Bulb Log every week for the last twenty years.....